Grand·Prix

INTERNATIONAL

LAS VEGAS

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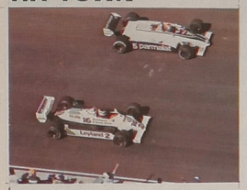

Like three gamblers in a Western movie, Messrs Reutemann, Piquet and Laffite arrived in Las Vegas for the final showdown. Only one of them could hit the jackpot: it turned out to be an exhausted Nelson Piquet.

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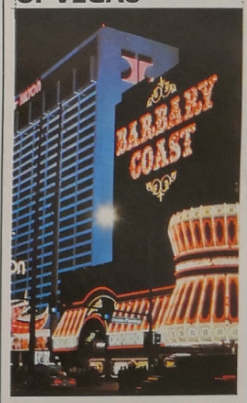

It's supposed to be grand and imposing, but somehow the effect is cheap and artificial: all that luxury borders on decadence. Keith Botsford reports on how the world of F1 came to terms with this hell-on-earth of slot machine freaks and street corner hookers.

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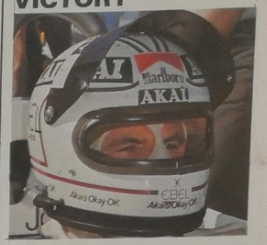

Will Alan Jones be able to stay retired? He showed no sign of wanting to give up at Las Vegas as he led his final race from start to finish. Mike Doodson kept an eye on the proceedings.

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The Formula One magazine is published 10 days after each Grand Prix.

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The paddock in Las Vegas

Tambay's accident: a miraculous escape

A FRIGHT FOR PATRICK

Patrick Tambay's last race with Ligier ended early at Las Vegas, where he had a horrifying shunt on lap 3. Following an earlier bump with Andrea de Cesaris, Patrick's Talbot-Matra leaped three feet in the air, only to go straight on into a concrete wall three corners later.

The front of the car was torn completely out of the tub, leaving Patrick's legs dangling. "I couldn't help thinking of Danny Ongais's accident at Indy," he confessed... He made his escape from the wreck simply by getting up and limping away with, incredibly, nothing worse than a badly bruised left leg to show for it.

LOTUS TRIAL FOR YOUNGSTERS

A handful of lucky young drivers will shortly receive an invitation from John Player Team Lotus to test one of the current Lotus 87 cars. They include Brazilian F3 man Roberto Moreno (who already has a Lotus contract but not a super licence !), Ensign driver Eliseo Salazar and Jonathan Palmer, the new Bristish F3 champion.

Although Colin Chapman tells us that he doesn't now anticipate losing either of his current drivers, it is clear that he is being careful. Both Elio de Angelis and Nigel Mansell were recruited by Lotus following test sessions involving several other drivers.

Also seen talking to Lotus in Vegas about a possible drive in 1982 were Keke Rosberg (whose contract with Fittipaldi doesn't run out until next year) and F2 front-runner Roberto Guerrero from Columbia.

F1 STARS FOR CALDER

Among the top F1 drivers already signed up to take part in the Australian GP at Calder raceway near Melbourne on November 8 are world champions Alan Jones and Nelson Piquet and Ligier's Jacques Laffitte. The race will be run this year to F/Atlantic rules, and Ralt boss Ron Tauranac has built a batch of cars specially for the occasion.

Many of the drivers and cars will be continuing to the British Crown Colony of Hong Kong and the nearby Portuguese possession of Macau, where the traditional Macau GP street race takes place on November 15. Both Australia and Macau have been tipped as possible venues for future world championship events, and it is reported that the Australian government has authorised the construction of a suitable circuit near the federal capital of Canberra.

16 GRANDS PRIX IN 1982

There are several changes of date on the latest F1 championship calendar which has been issued by FISA. The 16 races accepted are: **January 23** South Africa ; **March 7** Argentina ; **March 21** Brasil (Rio) ; **April 6** Long Beach ; **April 25** San Marino ; **May 9** Belgium ; **May 23** Monaco ; **June 6** Detroit ; **June 13** Canada ; **July 18** Gt Britain ; **July 25** France ; **August 8** W Germany ; **August 22** Switzerland (Dijon) ; **August 29** Holland ; **September 12** Italy ; **October 16** Las Vegas.

The Detroit GP is already in doubt (see Bernie Ecclestone's remarks above) and it has been reported that Zandvoort has not yet settled up for this year's GP. The Dutch date may be taken over by Austria (currently first reserve) but it looks as though the Spanish GP's financial shortfall has eliminated Jarama. However, the once-threatened South African GP is now definitely on. And Dijon haters will be less than happy with the date allocated to the Swiss...

ENGINEERS MEET

Meeting in Las Vegas a couple of days before practice for the GP began, engineering representatives of all the F1 teams failed to reach a unanimously satisfactory solution to the problems currently afflicting Formula 1.

"The current rules (banning sliding skirts) were introduced as a panic measure to stop us building a car with solid suspension that never in fact existed," said Colin Chapman. "Believe it or not, but all the rules achieved was... to create cars with solid suspension !"

Brabham's Gordon Murray agreed. "A return to sliding skirts is the only logical answer," he said, "but politically that's unacceptable." The engineers to whom GPI has spoken about the meeting have all accused Ferrari representative Marco Piccinnini of intransigence. "With enough pressure from the right people, though," said one, "we may be able to get something done which will enable us to avoid the sort of accidents we've seen this year."

THE COPS GRAB DOODSON

This edition of *Grand Prix International* came perilously close at Las Vegas to losing the services of our friend and English language editor Mike Doodson, who had the unfortunate experience of falling into the hands of the local constabulary.

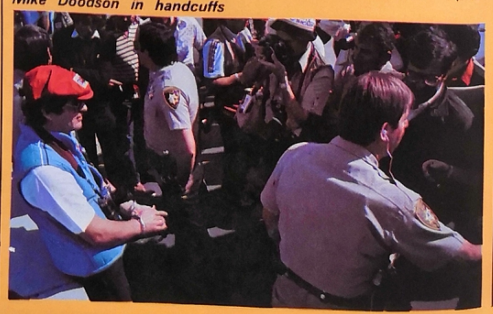
It was while Mike was out on the circuit on Friday morning, keeping his eagle eye on the cars at turn one, that he was a victim of a misunderstanding between the flag marshals and a well-fed but intellectually underprivileged trainee cop. Believing (wrongly, in this instance) that it is the marshal whose instructions shall prevail, our unfortunate contributor quickly found himself being manhandled by the officer, who decided that nothing less than handcuffs were necessary to subdue his catch of the day.

Thus it was that Mike found himself opposite the pits, two cops stolidly at his side, awaiting his fate in trepidation. And since he's a well-known and popular hack, his distress signals (handcuffs above his head) immediately attracted attention. By the time the session was over, there was quite a crowd of pressmen ready to go to his aid. If only the man with the club and the Colt had known what he had started ! This fresh incident involving a pressman and a policeman was just too much for many of the journalists to take, for Brazilian reporter Alvaro Teixera and French TV commentator Bernard Giroux had already fallen foul of the handcuff-happy Nevada lawmen. Before long there was the making of an ugly scene as the press began to throw taunts at the police. *"You can't treat us like dogs,"* they shouted, *"we've come a long way here for this race. You can't stop us working."*

As the crowd grew, so did the complaints. *"Your behaviour is disgraceful. This race is supposed to be good publicity for Las Vegas but what you've done is exactly the opposite, you'll see. There will be photos of this in papers all over the world."* Behind Doodson, the band of supporters grew, from all nationalities. *"Welcome to Caesars Palace,"* went the cry, *"the latest concentration camp."* Before long it became necessary to call up reinforcements, and by the time Mike was led away still in 'cuffs there were no fewer than 11 officers and two large dogs in attendance.

We had already started looking around for a new English language editor when the word came that the prisoner had been sprung. As a result of the incident, the police were taken away from the track and the pits

Mike Doodson in handcuffs



(where, under the terms of the contract with Caesars, they should never have been in the first place), and Mike went back to work with a fulsome apology. The only memories which remain are the marks on Mike's wrists and a nasty taste in everybody's mouths. We sincerely trust that the Vegas organisers will not allow the same mistake to be made again.

Dr Jonathan: an F3 champion... twice in three weeks

Dr JP DOES IT !

GPI's own man in Formula 3, Sussex medic Jonathan Palmer, has had a busy few weeks in the British Marlboro championship On the day of the Canadian GP he clinched the title, only to lose it a week later at Silverstone when some of his points were withdrawn for an unimportant bodywork contravention on his West Surrey Engineering Ralt.

One week later, "the Doc" won at Snetterton, despite a startline accident, to make sure of the title for the second time. Part of his reward included a trip to Vegas as a guest of GPI, and he will shortly be testing F1 cars with both Lotus and McLaren.

CHEEVER OUSTS TAMBAY AT TALBOT-LIGIER

For several weeks, Guy Ligier has been making no secret of

his doubts about number 2 Talbot driver Patrick Tambay, whose attitude he does not consider to be sufficiently forceful for a major team. The Frenchman will be replaced next year by Eddie Cheever, who is leaving Tyrrell.

It would be pointless to say that the news comes as a bitter disappointment to Tambay, who has loyally raced as number 2 to Jacques Laffitte despite frequently unequal equipment. Cheever, needless to say, is thrilled, because Ligier will be the first truly top-line team to hire him, and he anticipates lots of testing.

PETER WARR LEAVES FITTIPALDI

It was a very disenchanted Peter Warr who informed us at Las Vegas that he has left the Fitti-

paldi team. Regardless of what lies in the future for the brothers Fittipaldi, Peter says that he is relieved to see the end of his contract, which expired a couple of days before the race in Vegas.

Formerly with Lotus, where he team-managed several world championships at Colin Chapman's side, Peter moved to Wolf (as Frank Williams's replacement) when the team was revamped for the 1977 season with Jody Scheckter as its driver.

"I love racing," says Peter, *"but there's no way that I am prepared to continue working here on a hand to mouth basis."*

GAMBLING... IN A CAR PARK

"Hail, Caesar!" A new world champion was crowned in Las Vegas. On the podium, in his overalls and gold laurels, Nelson Piquet looked more like a Roman emperor than the champion he'd just become. Euphoria mixed with bad taste as he embraced race winner Alan Jones... and the winners incongruously tried to wear their tyre-makers' baseball caps as well as the Caesars Palace leurels.

An exhausted Carlos Reutemann sat in his Williams' cockpit. His overalls were heavy withe the sweat that he'd expended in his demanding but fruitless bid for the world championship crown. Before the race, he'd summed up his chances in gambling terms: He'd talked of "roulette" and "casino", but he'd lost at both. This oddly-located Grand Prix in the world's gaming capital brought to an end an exciting Formula 1 season which will be covered in our end-of-season review. But it was also the first in a new era of Grands Prix. It's becoming increasingly clear that Grands Prix of the future will take place where there is money, where racing can capture the public's imagination. Formula 1 has often been referred to as a circus, but that circus is becoming increasingly flexible. If you can run a Grand Prix in a car park, then the circus can come to any town. Today Las Vegas, where tomorrow? Probably New York. And, after that, who knows: London? Paris? Tokyo? Los Angeles? It seems that any promotor who can guarantee the money demanded by the constructors can host a Grand Prix. After that, it's simply a matter of finding a wide road, some concrete blocks to mark out the track, a big garage to house the cars, and you've got a race. But we'd like to think that real street racing takes place in streets used by the public every day, not in car parks.

The Caesars Palace Grand Prix proved that the circus can come to town. It was a real race, tough on the drivers and hard on the cars. In a word, it was demanding, just what a Grand Prix should be. But it's a policy that some will find hard to stomach. Formula 1 is resolutely turning its back on traditional circuits like Spa, Nürburgring and Clermont-Ferrand. Its future appears to be in the circus that comes to town.

Eric Bhat

the situation, for although there's a major scrap brewing, the contestants are all true sportsmen. Jacques turns on his heel and heads back to his pit. Still smiling, Nelson just says, *"he's a nice guy, Jacques."*

The jocular Brabham driver loves to have fun. He dips into his bag for another bit of gadgetry. It happens to be a plastic bear mask which he pulls out. The effect, even with his overalls underneath, is positively alarming. Every single member of the ream, from Gordon Murray in his Lennon-style granny glasses to Herbie Blash and the mechanics, breaks out laughing at the sight. They're a very close bunch at Brabham.

It's all in stark contrast with the Williams team alongside. Nothing here but serious faces and bustle. Alone on a wall sits Carlos Reutemann, concentrating hard as always. By nature he's never been a sociable kind of guy... and the tense atmosphere that has existed in his team ever since the disagreement between himself and Alan Jones in Brazil has made him even more withdrawn. There is a widespread belief that it's been an uphill battle for him all season long with his own team, whose first loyalty has always been with Alan Jones, the number one driver. Carlos is on the eve of his 144th Grand Prix. It is a vital race for him: much as he tries to hide the fact, the world championship is his life's aim. After 12 years of struggle, Carlos is understandably favourite to do it at the bottom of most people's hearts.

By Friday evening, at the end of official qualifying, Carlos is already comfortably over the first hurdle. Not only has he topped the polls with the press but he has also become the logical favourite to win both the Caesars Palace GP and the title itself. With pole position in his pocket, he has looked confident and determined throughout practice, dispelling any qualms about his psychological strength. Whatever fears he may be harbouring before this final clash, he has hidden them behind a front of nobility and nonchalance. That face was made for Hollywood!

Even his arrival in the paddock on Saturday, race morning, was worthy of Tinseltown. Slowly but purposefully, he trudged into the paddock under the weight of his famous travelling bag and went towards his motorhome. There in the sunshine, Frank Williams, Patrick Head and Charlie Crichton-Stewart were enjoying the sunshine at a table. From a distance, the Argentine saluted them like a Roman emperor (his aristocratic features made it singularly appropriate) and surveyed the scene. What would he say? And to whom? *"Hey, Charlie... what time is this bloody warm-up?"* Frank and Patrick carried on in deep conversation, barely noticing.

On the night before the race, there is no doubt that the man who got the least amount of sleep was Carlos. Perhaps because he had been fastest in both of the official qualifying sessions, he seemed to carry the entire weight of the race on his shoulders alone. He would have liked people to think that he didn't care one way or the other, but he did. *"It's a casino here,"* he said in the pressroom, *"like roulette. Anything could happen... broken gearbox, puncture, engine... they all get a lot of punishment. As I say, it's a roulette."*

Who will be the greatest danger? The question comes from a journalist: Piquet or Laffite? Carlos spins round and doesn't hesitate to name his greatest worry. *"It will be Alan Jones. He wants to win."* Obviously he has decided to joke about the rivalry with his team mate, for he makes fun of the situation. *"If Alan and I go off together at the first corner, we have agreed to walk back to the pits with big smiles on our faces..."*

Carlos's number 1 rival for the title was, of course, Nelson Piquet, because Laffite was way back on the grid. Most of the "experts" had already decided, however, that the Brazilian didn't stand much chance of getting close to the Argentine. Despite its 13 inch front wheels, the Brabham had been outclassed by the Williams throughout practice. And everyone knew that Nelson was in trouble with his neck, which simply couldn't support the weight of his head and helmet against the g-forces of the left-hand turns of this counter-clockwise circuit. He hadn't improved the situation on Thursday afternoon by calling a masseur, whose attentions resulted in a giant bruise on his back which prevented him from doing more than two quick laps in a row the following day.

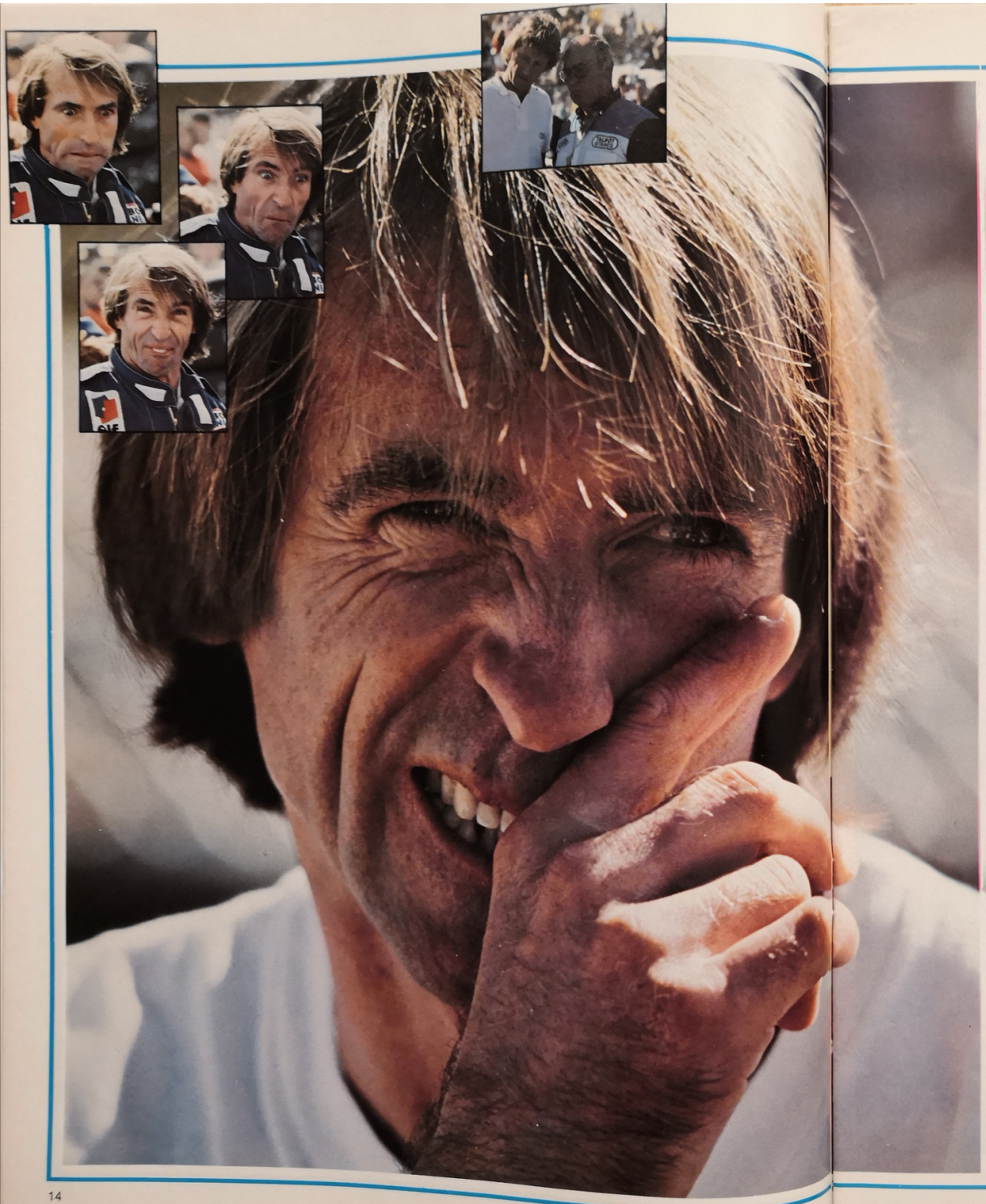
Piquet nevertheless believed that his chances were good. *"He's incredibly relaxed here"* said Gordon Murray. *"He went through all of this bullshit before, in Montreal last year, so he's used to it. He refuses to let it affect him."* Nelson went through all his usual routines, taking his racing very seriously but allowing himself some moments of fun between practice sessions. *"What are the journalists saying abut my chances?"* he asked. *"Do they think I have a chance?"* The question turned on him, and his reply was received without comment: *"personnall, I feel that I'm in a pretty good position to win the title."*

Guy Ligier, on the other hand, wasn't smiling. After practice, he felt that things had taken a turn for the worst: *"I think that we've definitely lost the championship."* Laffite was only 12th on the grid. To win the title, he had to win the race, and from the middle of the field, that would be almost impossible.

As for Jacques himself, the only bad thing that could happen was that the sky fell in. As far as he was concerned, everything was still possible: *"no race is ever lost, there's always hope,"* he said, in some way convincing himself that he still had a chance. Guy Ligier's extraordinarily muscular nose was twitching more than ever. Jean-Pierre Jabouille simply looked worried throughout practice. His brother-in-law wasn't quick, yet there was no reason why he shouldn't be.

Teammate Patrick Tambay and Laffite frequently swopped cars in practice, but each time Tambay was the quicker, no matter which car he drove. Was Laffite lacking determination? Maybe he didn't like the circuit? Was he out-psyched by

Carlos Reutemann looked the favourite before the race, after an excellent two days of practice. He wanted so badly to win the title, but he was the big loser in Las Vegas. Some say that this lonely man had little moral support from his team (Photos: Jacques Cochin - Eric Vargiolu/DPPI)



the title race? Some of the Ligier team members blamed the driver. *"They're really getting on my nerves. They keep saying that I'm not on form. I'm fed up with them."* Was he perhaps taking out his self-frustration on the team?

In truth, Jacques was confusing himself by swopping cars. His judgement was clouded by the constant changing of cars, and he was also annoyed that Tambay, whom he'd hoped would be his teammate next year, had been sacked. It was only at the end of the final qualifying session that he came to a positive conclusion: Tambay's car was better than his own, although why remained a mystery: it couldn't be for aerodynamic reasons. *"My car is crap,"* he fumed. By then it was too late to do anything about it. There were no more qualifiers. So Jacques would start from the sixth row of the grid. There was no Ligier magic that Friday.

But it all changed on race day. Of the three pretenders to the title, Laffite was the man who came closest to winning the race, even if he had been the least competitive in practice. And Reutmann, consistently fastest in practice, scarcely showed in the top six throught the race, which resulted in some adverse comments from his team. Piquet, within two seconds of losing his vital two points, won the coveted title. Fifth place was nothing to shout about, but he'd shown considerable courage.

Reutemann's confidence took a bashing within seconds of the start. He was eclipsed by three or four others as the cars headed for the first corner, and then he found that his Williams understeered in certain corners, and oversteered in others. Then the gearbox began to play up. While Jones built up an enormous lead, Carlos found himself struggling to maintain seventh place, and Piquet was the man who was trying to overtake.

"I passed Carlos easily," commented the Brazilian later. That was on the 17th lap. From then on, Carlos continued to drop back as his gearbox problems worsened: *"I missed gears 50 times."* It was a painful cross to bear, particularly as his car's springs were too hard, and the car was incredibly uncomfortable to drive over the bumps. He'd arrived in Las Vegas as World Championship leader. Now he was just an also-ran. The watching Williams team were dismayed at their second driver's performance.

Laffite, on the other hand, took off like a rocket. He'd chosen the unfortunate Tambay's car, and used it to good effect. He was soon in fourth place, but held up behind Villeneuve. *"He was costing me a second a lap. And my tyres weren't up to temperature, so they were picking up rubber off the track. They were soon clogged up."* When Villeneuve retired, Jacques was able to get into a rhythm, but the harm had been done, and he would suffer.

Beside the track, Jean-Pierre Jabouille understood what was wrong. Later, when Prost stopped for new tyres, Jabouille hung out a sign saying "707 OK - GO FAST." He was worried that Laffite would think that his handling had suffered because his soft 707 tyres had gone off. He wanted Laffite to speed up, hoping that it would clear the rubber off them. But they just picked up more rubber, and a few laps later, Laffite pitted for fresh tyres. His title race was over.

And what of Piquet? He was in a bad way. It was a nasty shock when his pit signalled that there were still 33 laps to go. *"I thought it was nearly all over. I couldn't do any more. When I saw the board, I thought I'd die."* Two laps later, utterly exhausted, he was sick in his helmet. But he carried on, and while he may not have been one of the front runners, he managed to remain in the points. His fifth place was scarcely something to be excited about, but the two points were enough to win the World Championship. He only just made it, for Laffite and Watson were only two seconds behind him at the end. Another two or three laps, and the outcome might have been very different.

As he covered his slowing-down lap, Piquet gulped fresh air. When he came to a halt in the pit lane and saw his mechanics and compatriot Emerson Fittipaldi, tears rolled down his cheeks under his helmet. He was finished. A mechanic lifted him out of the cockpit. The crowd closed in on him. People patted his shoulder, thumped him on his already painful back. Journalists asked him questions, photographers pushed one another out of the way. Then their faces began to blurr, and the world turned black. Piquet passed out.

He wasn't out for long. Minutes later, he was on the rostrum and embraced by his arch-rival and championship predecessor Alan Jones. *"Let's forget all the hassles, and bury the hatchet,"* he suggested. Some say that Alan later said, *"well done champ - but year it's my turn again."*

And where was Gordon Murray, the master-mind of Piquet's win? Already on his way back to England. He hated Las Vegas, and began his count-down for take-off some 36 hours earlier. Championship title or no, he couldn't wait to get away.

While they celebrated on the rostrum, there was a poignant scene in the pit-lane. Carlos Reutemann was like a punch-drunk boxer. His face was a picture of disappointment. It was some time before he got out of the car. As he eased his cramped limbs, he was helped out of the Williams. Frank Williams waited to talk to him on the right side of the FW07. Reutemann stepped out on the left side. He staggered over to his bag, and bent down to pick it up. Worried, Frank leaned over with him, but still not a word was spoken.

Carlos straightened again, and seeing the photographers around him, tried to smile. It was an unhappy effort, tinged with disappointment. Then he humped his bag onto his hunched shoulders and walked away like a lonesome cowboy. Behind him, the Williams team celebrated. Jones had won the race. □

EXTRA, EXTRA

SMILES AT LOTUS

Colin Chapman was in fine spirits at Las Vegas, not at all downcast about a season which began with such high hopes for his ill-fated twin-chassis Lotus 88. But when he called your correspondent into his motorhome on race morning, it was mainly to have a bit of fun about "jailbirds". It gave this reporter fine opportunity to turn the tables for once on a team manager, for it was clear that Colin (like so many of the journalists that he loves to criticise) had got all his facts wrong about the incident described elsewhere in these pages...

On a more serious note, the Lotus chief did not hesitate to pour scorn on the twisty circuit where the "GP of the Parking Lots" was to be run. *"A Grande Epreuve should have a bit of majesty,"* said Chapman ; *"this is a pipsqueak race on a pipsqueak circuit. I can't imagine why we have to come here when there are so many great racing circuits in the world. But I suppose we shall to accept it, because this is a Bernie Ecclestone promotion."*

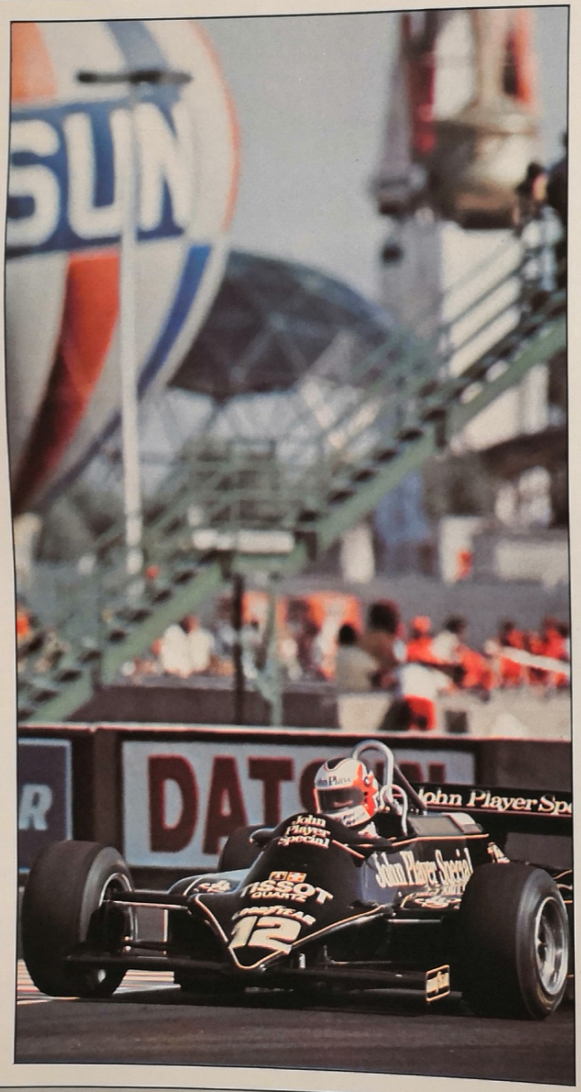
By Saturday afternoon, when the race was over, Chapman's feelings about the Caesars Palace circuit might have softened a little, for his driver Nigel Mansell had finished a fine 4th. The talented man from Hall Green had shown yet again that on a circuit where the narrow-track Lotus 87 is more at home than on faster courses, he can race with the very best... as his overtaking manouevres on both Nelson Piquet and Bruno Giacomelli had shown.

Indeed Nigel would have finished 3rd had it not been for some late race problems with his car. *"The tyres weren't fantastic : I didn't have as much grip as some of the others,"* he said. *"And at the end of the race I was so worried about the engine temperature that I had to keep down to 10,000 rpm instead of 11,000, just to make sure of getting to the finish".*

The unfortunate Elio de Angelis completed only two laps at Vegas, the victim of a split water radiator. But although de Angelis is being courted by Alfa Romeo to take over the place which could be available next year if Mario Andretti decides to move on, most of the Lotus personnel are convinced that both their drivers will stay with them despite this season's difficulties with sponsorship (before the return of John Player) and the technical wrangles over the Lotus 88.

Just to keep the press on its toes, a hearing at the Royal Automobile Club in London has recently decided that the Stewards of the Meeting at the British GP were wrong to have rejected the Lotus 88B as they did after the first day's practice. Asked whether he would pursue the matter any further, Chapman grinned. *"I haven't seen the details of the judgement yet,"* he said, *"but I am convinced now, more than ever, that the twin-chassis concept would be a perfect way for us to get out of the impasse that exists between the teams over the best method of giving Formula 1 cars some suspensions movement again..."*

MGD



ALFA ROMEO: WITH THE RIGHT RUBBER...

It's almost predictable: at the start of the year, the Alfas look promising, and then they sink back into anonymity in mid-season, only to bounce back again at the end. But that's the only similarity between the last two years. Last year's progress was halted by the death of Patrick Depailler at Hockenheim. Teammate Bruno Giacomelli, who had become close to the Frenchman, was deeply upsed by the death of his friend. He found himself with the full responsibility of one of Europe's major car constructors on his shoulders in only his first full season of Formula 1. It wasn't an enviable position to be in.

At the start of 1981, the Italian was joined by Mario Andretti, a man who had already proved his test driving prowess at Lotus. The early races of the new skirtless Formula 1 clearly demonstrated what everyone had suspected: that Alfa's torquey V12 was competitive in the chassis, providing that none of the competition had any ground effect. But the team's advantage didn't last long. Brabham restored ground effect to Formula 1 with hydro-pneumatic suspension, and FISA appeared powerless to do anything about it. So within a couple of races, ground effect, not one of the Alfa team's strong points, was a vital factor once more.

Alfa Romeo, and the other major constructors who supported FISA against skirts, found themselves in a difficult position. In the firm belief that skirts would never reappear in Formula 1, they had developed their cars in another direction. Now they were having to retrace their steps, study this new type of suspension and refit skirts. It was only when the jobless Gérard Ducarouge joined the team that Alfa began to make headway. Zandvoort, Monza and Montreal were all progressive proof that the Alfas were becoming more and more competitive. In Canada, Giacomelli and Andretti were potential winners for the first time in many months. But Giacomelli's fourth place was the only reward.

In practice at Las Vegas, the Alfas proved to be consistently competitive. And in raceday's warm-up, the chances appeared even better, for the Alfas were just as competitive on hard tyres as their competitors on softer rubber. This race within a race, between World Championship contenders Williams, Brabham and Ligier, gave rise to the hopes of some of the outsiders.

That morning, Andretti, with Giacomelli and Villeneuve, was one of the few drivers to raise Michelin man Pierre Dupasquier's flagging spirits. First of all McLaren, then Renault and Ligier had decided to fit a mixture of tyres including very soft compounds, and it was doubtful whether their cars would finish without a mid-race tyre change. But the Alfas were happier on their hard tyres. Giacomelli chose 701s, the hardest, while Andretti chose 305s, an intermediate tyre which received the full blessing of the Michelin men.

Giacomelli, who started higher up the grid than Andretti, soon found himself up with the leaders in fourth place behind Jones, Prost and Villeneuve, whom he tried to overtake for 15 laps. *"The car was very* difficult to drive," commented Bruno afterwards. *"I had very little grip at the start, I had to be extremely careful. That's why Laffite overtook me on the 20th lap. He was much faster than I was at that stage of the race."*

Andretti took it easy at the start, giving himself time to settle down. But when he felt that his Alfa was competitive, his climb through the field was nothing short of spectacular. From ninth place, he shot up to fourth between laps 15 and 25, overtaking Watson, Reutemann, Piquet and Giacomelli. His duel with Bruno was a no-holds-barred effort. The two men were side-by-side after the straight before the pits, and Mario just slipped through in front of his teammate.

Shortly after, Bruno spun which dumped him to 11th place behind Patrese. Two laps later, Andretti's superb climb through the field came to an end when his rear suspension broke.

Would he have caught the leaders? Judging by Giacomelli's drive, he might well have done. The Italian just failed to take second place but was rewarded with the Wolf "fighting spirit" trophy. And Mario was *"more determined than I've seen him yet this season,"* according to Pierre Blanchet of Michelin. Bruno was delighted with his first visit to the rostrum this year. *"It feels good to have finished a race,"* he joked under the Nevada sun. Undoubtedly, the races in North America suit him.

Mario LUINI

EXTRA, EXTRA

MELLOW YELLOWS

It was Saturday morning, shortly before the warm-up. A young man zig-zagged through the paddock at high speed, bent double. A second, darker-haired, wearing only his pants and socks, sprang out from behind an unmarked motor-home and pelted the other guy with egg shells left over from someone's breakfast. At the same time, the mini-Tarzan let out screeches and cries that would have been better suited to Tarzan's pet monkey Cheetah.

The scene was scarcely even noticed by three American spectators passing by. After all, there a lot of weird things to see in Las Vegas. Anyway, armed with their 250 dollar Golden tickets, they were off to see the Formula 1 drivers. They wouldn't have believed that they'd just seen two of them: Arnoux being chased, Prost the undressed pursuer, two of the fastest men in the world today, and employed by the ever-so-respectable Régie Renault.

It would be difficult to find two more dissimilar men than Alain Prost and René Arnoux. Even so, both men are strangely allied. Alain has self-confidence, something that René never appears to have. Prost's wit makes Arnoux laugh. It's his inborn sense of repartee, the right word at the right moment, in the right voice, and René is the perfect foil for Alain's jokes. It's an odd yet strong relationship, which doesn't really conform to the team's policy.

But don't think for a moment that this easy-going atmosphere detracts from both driver's competitive instinct. Prost may not have been a championship contender since Montreal, but he still wanted to finish in the first three in the series. And Arnoux was still trying to shake off the gremlin that has brought him bad luck since the beginning of the season. In the world of Formula 1 no one can afford to stand still. Progress is the name of the game, yet at the same time one has to be humble enough to regard one's adversaries as being stronger than they really are.

At Las Vegas, the Renault team's aim was to show that the RE30s were just as competitive on a tight track as they had been on fast circuits such as Silverstone, Zandvoort and Monza. In this quest, Arnoux's RE30, a replacement monocoque after he'd crashed within 500 yards of the start at Montreal, was fitted with the carbon fibre front and rear wings seen on Prost's Renault at Montreal. In order to improve power at low and medium revs, Arnoux's engine was fitted with electronic ignition. But it was soon replaced, as any improvement was minimal.

The Renault team didn't find it easy to prove the point on this new circuit. New suspension had been designed for the track, but the team was somewhat disturbed to find that it wasn't nearly as tight and twisty as was at first suspected. And the track conditions changed as more laps were covered and the rubber went down. It wasn't easy for anyone to set up their cars.

All the same, practice was fascinating to watch. The principal aim was to get a good grid position, it would be hard to overtake in the race. So everyone's priority was to set the car up as quickly but also as efficiently as possible. After the first day's practice, the Renaults were some way off the pace, but it didn't dampen the teams optimism. Larrousse smiled as he said, *"We're on the wrong track. We'll have to start from scratch again tomorrow".*

But it wasn't until Friday morning that the name of Prost kept making its appearance near the top of the time sheets. Arnoux, on the other hand, had gone off the track in a right hander taken flat out in fourth. *"I slid too wide and went over the kerb,"* admitted René. The result was a badly bent Renault and a badly strained neck for the driver. He would have to drive the heavier spare in the final qualifying session.

At the end of the final session, Prost was obviously upset. He'd just left the pits on his second set of qualifiers when out came the chequered flag to signal the end of the session ... six minutes too early. Just one of the organisational teething troubles at the first Caesars Palace Grand Prix. *"It's infuriating I'd just gone out to do a time that would surely have put me on the front row of the grid,"* fumed the Frenchman. Arnoux was only 13th fasted in the spare.

It was during the warm-up that the team drivers took a gamble. And it probably lost them the race. They opted for soft tyres for the race, because *"the hard tyres pick up rubber too easily,"* explained Prost. There was nothing wrong in that, it proved to be quite true. It was simply that the softer tyres didn't last the race. Just before half distance, the second placed Prost had to duck into the pits for a rapid tyre change. Quickly, he moved back up to finish second. Alain could derive some satisfaction from leading in the rain at Montreal and finishing second at Las Vegas, even if he did only finish fifth in the World Championship.

Once again, Arnoux didn't finish. This time, the engine was at fault. A plug blew out. *"Well, I certainly finished the season as I started it,"* sighed the man from Grenoble. *"But at least it can't get any worse next year."*

This end-of-season demonstration has proved that the Renault is at home on all kinds of circuits, whether fast or slow. The biggest threat for next year will be from those who have chosen to follow Renault down the turbo trail...

Mario LUINI

Postcard from Las Vegas

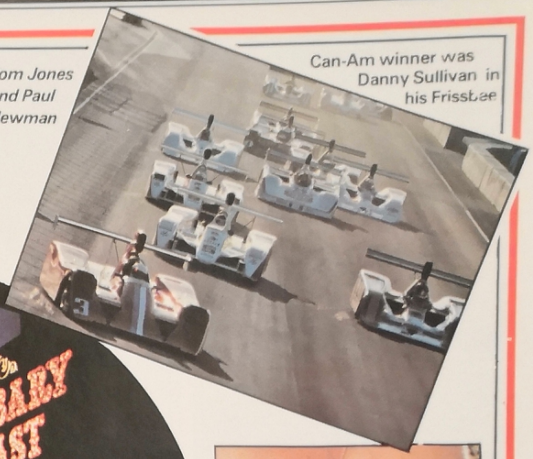
A legionaire to guard the gladiators

Yes, the most international F1 magazine was on sale in Vegas too

A happy bunch of Piquet fans behind the Brabham pit had something to shout about

Rome reproducted in plastic: nobody reads "Decline and Fall" at Caesars...

Tom Jones and Paul Newman



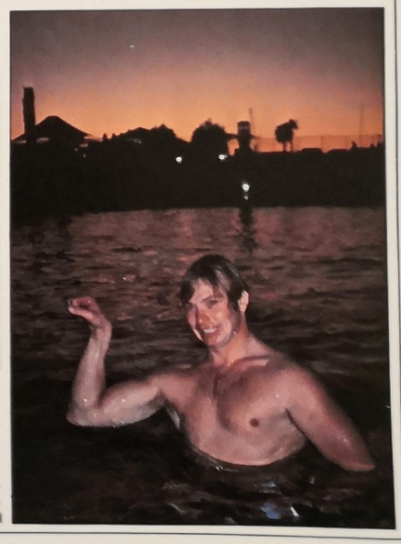
Can-Am winner was Danny Sullivan in his Frissbee

The Valley of the Shadow of Death, Nevada style

The lights flash and the slot machines jangle

A New Orleans jazz band (all fibreglass, natch)

In the distance, the desert and the mountains

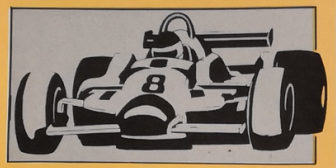


Didier Pironi flexes his muscles as he takes a late dip in the Caesars pool

Las Vegas statistics

CAESARS PALACE GRAND PRIX

Date: October 17, 1981
Circuit length: 2.26 miles
Race distance: 75 laps, 169.50 miles
Conditions: hot and sunny
Attendance: 45,000 spectators



STARTING GRID

JONES Williams FW07 1'17"995
PIQUET Brabham BT49 1'18"161
WATSON Marlboro MP4 1'18"617
GIACOMELLI Alfa Romeo 179 1'18"792
ANDRETTI Alfa Romeo 179 1'19"068
LAFFITE Talbot Ligier JS17 1'19"167
DE CESARIS Marlboro MP4 1'19"217
REBAQUE Brabham BT49 1'19"571
PIRONI Ferrari 126C 1'19"899
ROSBERG Fittipaldi F8C 1'20"729
WARWICK Toleman TG181 1'21"294
SALAZAR Ensign N180B 1'21"629
REUTEMANN Williams FW07 1'17"821
VILLENEUVE Ferrari 126C 1'18"060
PROST Renault RE30 1'18"433
TAMBAY Talbot Ligier JS17 1'18"681
MANSELL Lotus 87 1'19"044
PATRESE Arrows A3 1'19"152
ARNOUX Renault RE30 1'19"197
DE ANGELIS Lotus 87 1'19"562
ALBORETO Tyrrell 011 1'19"774
CHEEVER Tyrrell 011 1'20"475
JARIER Osella FA1/C 1'20"781
SURER Theodore TY01 1'21"430

Non-qualified:

BORGUDD (ATS HGS1) 1'21"665
SERRA (Fittipaldi F8C) 1'21"672
DALY (March 811) 1'21"824
VILLENEUVE J. (Arrows A3) 1'22"822
HENTON (Toleman TG181) 1'22"960
GABBIANI (Osella FA1/B) 1'26"634

TIMES IN UNOFFICIAL PRACTICE

WEDNESDAY MORNING

Jones 1'22"106 - Watson 1'23"372 - Reutemann 1'24"379 - Giacomelli 1'24"731 - De Angelis 1'24"936 - Laffite 1'25"092 - Prost 1'25"169 - Mansell 1'25"237 - Piquet 1'25"655 - Jarier 1'26"121 - Tambay 1'26"132 - Pironi 1'26"352 - Alboreto 1'26"447 - Cheever 1'26"911 - Villeneuve 1'26"914 - De Cesaris 1'27"093 - Andretti 1'27"429 - Daly 1'27"444 - Borgudd 1'27"600 - Surer 1'28"272 - Henton 1'28"440 - Rebaque 1'29"027 - Warwick 1'29"095 - Villeneuve J. 1'29"666 - Patrese 1'29"696 - Rosberg 1'29"965 - Gabbiani 1'30"024 - Salazar 1'30"472 - Serra 1'30"722 - Arnoux 1'31"939

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON

Jones 1'19"488 - Reutemann 1'19"569 - Mansell 1'20"495 - Watson 1'20"977 - Andretti 1'21"510 - Patrese 1'21"701 - Giacomelli 1'21"810 - Piquet 1'21"922 - Rebaque 1'22"042 - Villeneuve 1'22"434 - Tambay 1'22"605 - De Angelis 1'22"788 - Cheever 1'23"245 - Alboreto 1'23"624 - Jarier 1'23"693 - Prost 1'23"697 - De Cesaris 1'23"729 - Borgudd 1'23"767 - Daly 1'23"839 - Surer 1'24"596 - Arnoux 1'24"638 - Pironi 1'24"701 - Laffite 1'25"025 - Rosberg 1'25"181 - Salazar 1'25"195 - Warwick 1'26"249 - Serra 1'26"344 - Henton 1'26"453 - Villeneuve J. 1'26"819 - Gabbiani 1'30"603

THURSDAY MORNING

Piquet 1'18"379 - Villeneuve 1'19"138 - Jones 1'19"155 - Reutemann 1'19"426 - Pironi 1'19"494 - Andretti 1'19"638 - Giacomelli 1'19"760 - Watson 1'19"891 - Mansell 1'19"966 - De Angelis 1'20"127 - Patrese 1'20"173 - De Cesaris 1'20"176 - Tambay 1'20"254 - Arnoux 1'20"368 - Prost 1'20"431 - Laffite 1'20"595 - Rebaque 1'20"833 - Rosberg 1'21"636 - Borgudd 1'21"813 - Daly 1'21"973 - Serra 1'22"090 - Alboreto 1'22"162 - Cheever 1'22"345 - Salazar 1'22"434 - Surer 1'22"562 - Warwick 1'23"554 - Henton 1'23"835 - Villeneuve J. 1'24"231 - Jarier 2'23"004 - Gabbiani 3'44"962

FRIDAY MORNING

Jones 1'18"317 - Andretti 1'18"815 - Reutemann 1'19"022 - Watson 1'19"232 - Patrese 1'19"395 - Prost 1'19"466 - Villeneuve 1'19"659 - Mansell 1'19"747 - Rebaque 1'19"796 - Tambay 1'19"851 - De Angelis 1'19"912 - Giacomelli 1'20"509 - Cheever 1'20"751 - Pironi 1'20"980 - Daly 1'21"034 - Laffite 1'21"309 - Piquet 1'21"351 - Alboreto 1'21"380 - Rosberg 1'21"732 - Serra 1'21"911 - Arnoux 1'21"981 - Borgudd 1'22"003 - Jarier 1'22"552 - Salazar 1'22"568 - Villeneuve J. 1'22"727 - Surer 1'22"875 - Warwick 1'23"281 - Henton 1'23"999 - De Cesaris 6'02"190

SATURDAY MORNING

Watson 1'20"011 - Prost 1'20"365 - Jones 1'20"778 - Laffite 1'20"865 - Reutemann 1'20"963 - Villeneuve 1'21"246 - Giacomelli 1'21"271 - Piquet 1'21"343 - De Cesaris 1'21"479 - Mansell 1'21"562 - De Angelis 1'21"797 - Tambay 1'21"884 - Andretti 1'21"918 - Rebaque 1'22"196 - Pironi 1'22"355 - Arnoux 1'22"383 - Cheever 1'22"390 - Jarier 1'22"600 - Patrese 1'22"956 - Alboreto 1'23"414 - Salazar 1'24"836 - Surer 1'24"866 - Warwick 1'26"858 - Rosberg 1'27"732

FINAL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS

Position/Driver	Long Beach	Brazil	Argentina	San Marino	Belgium	Monaco	Spain	France	Britain	Germany	Austria	Holland	Italy	Canada	Las Vegas	TOTAL
1. Piquet	4	—	9	9	—	—	—	4	—	9	4	6	1	2	2	50
2. Reutemann	6	9	6	4	9	—	3	—	6	—	2	—	4	—	—	49
3. Jones	9	6	3	—	—	6	—	—	—	—	3	4	6	—	9	46
4. Laffite	—	1	—	—	6	4	6	—	4	4	9	—	—	9	1	44
5. Prost	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	9	—	6	—	9	9	—	6	43
6. Watson	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	6	9	1	1	—	—	6	—	27
7. Villeneuve	—	—	—	—	3	9	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	25
8. De Angelis	—	2	1	—	2	—	2	1	—	—	—	2	3	1	—	14
9. Arnoux	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	6	—	—	—	—	11
Rebaque	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	2	3	—	3	—	—	—	11
11. Patrese	—	4	—	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10
Cheever	2	—	—	—	1	2	—	—	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	10
13. Pironi	—	—	—	2	—	3	—	2	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	9
14. Mansell	—	—	—	—	4	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	8
15. Giacomelli	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	4	7
16. Surer	—	3	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4
17. Andretti	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3
18. Tambay	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
De Cesaris	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Borgudd	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Salazar	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1

RESULTS

1. JONES	Williams FW07	75 laps, 169.50 miles in 1h44'09"077, 97.899 mph
2. PROST	Renaault RE30	20" behind
3. GIACOMELLI	Alfa Romeo 179	20"4 behind
4. MANSELL	Lotus 87	47"4 behind
5. PIQUET	Brabham BT49	1'16"4 behind
6. LAFFITE	Talbot Ligier JS17	1'18"1 behind
7. WATSON	Marlboro MP4	1'18"4 behind
8. REUTEMANN	Williams FW07	1 lap behind
9. PIRONI	Ferrari 126C	2 laps behind
10. ROSBERG	Fittipaldi F8C	2 laps behind
11. PATRESE	Arrows A3	4 laps behind
12. DE CESARIS	Marlboro MP4	6 laps behind

Fastest lap: PIRONI (Ferrari 126C), 1'20"156, 101.861 mph.

CONSTRUCTORS' CUP

1. Williams 95 pts - **2.** Brabham 61 pts - **3.** Renault 54 pts - **4.** Talbot 44 pts - **5.** Ferrari 34 pts - **6.** McLaren 28 pts - **7.** Lotus 22 pts - **8.** Arrows, Tyrrell and Alfa 10 pts - **11.** Ensign 5 pts - **12.** Theodore and ATS 1 pt.

THEIR FASTEST RACE LAPS

	Time	Lap n
Reutemann	**1'17"821**	1'18"343
Jones	1'18"236	**1'17"995**
Villeneuve	1'18"457	**1'18"060**
Piquet	1'18"954	**1'18"161**
Prost	**1'18"433**	1'18"760
Watson	1'19"975	**1'18"617**
Tambay	1'19"874	**1'18"681**
Giacomelli	1'20"570	**1'18"792**
Mansell	**1'19"044**	1'19"623
Andretti	1'19"594	**1'19"068**
Patrese	1'20"132	**1'19"152**
Laffite	1'19"878	**1'19"167**
Arnoux	1'19"966	**1'19"197**
De Cesaris	1'19"338	**1'19"217**
De Angelis	1'20"337	**1'19"562**
Rebaque	1'20"555	**1'19"571**
Alboreto	1'21"964	**1'19"774**
Pironi	**1'19"899**	1'21"347
Cheever	1'21"116	**1'20"475**
Rosberg	1'21"299	**1'20"729**
Jarier	22'19"563	**1'20"781**
Warwick	1'22"491	**1'21"294**
Surer	1'21"889	**1'21"430**
Salazar	1'22"616	**1'21"629**

OFFICIAL PRACTICE TIMES

	1st session	2nd session
Jones	1'21"642	14
Prost	1'21"249	41
Giacomelli	1'21"748	54
Mansell	1'22"477	65
Piquet	1'22"679	31
Laffite	1'21"337	73
Watson	1'21"178	32
Reutemann	1'22"916	11
Pironi	1'20"156	49
Rosberg	1'24"370	15
Patrese	1'21"969	49
De Cesaris	1'20"302	29
Alboreto	1'23"231	25
Salazar	1'24"606	50
Warwick	1'25"104	36
Andretti	1'21"883	28
Villeneuve	1'23"267	8
Rebaque	1'23"012	19
Surer	1'26"133	12
Cheever	1'24"619	8
Arnoux	1'23"473	5
De Angelis	3'22"696	2

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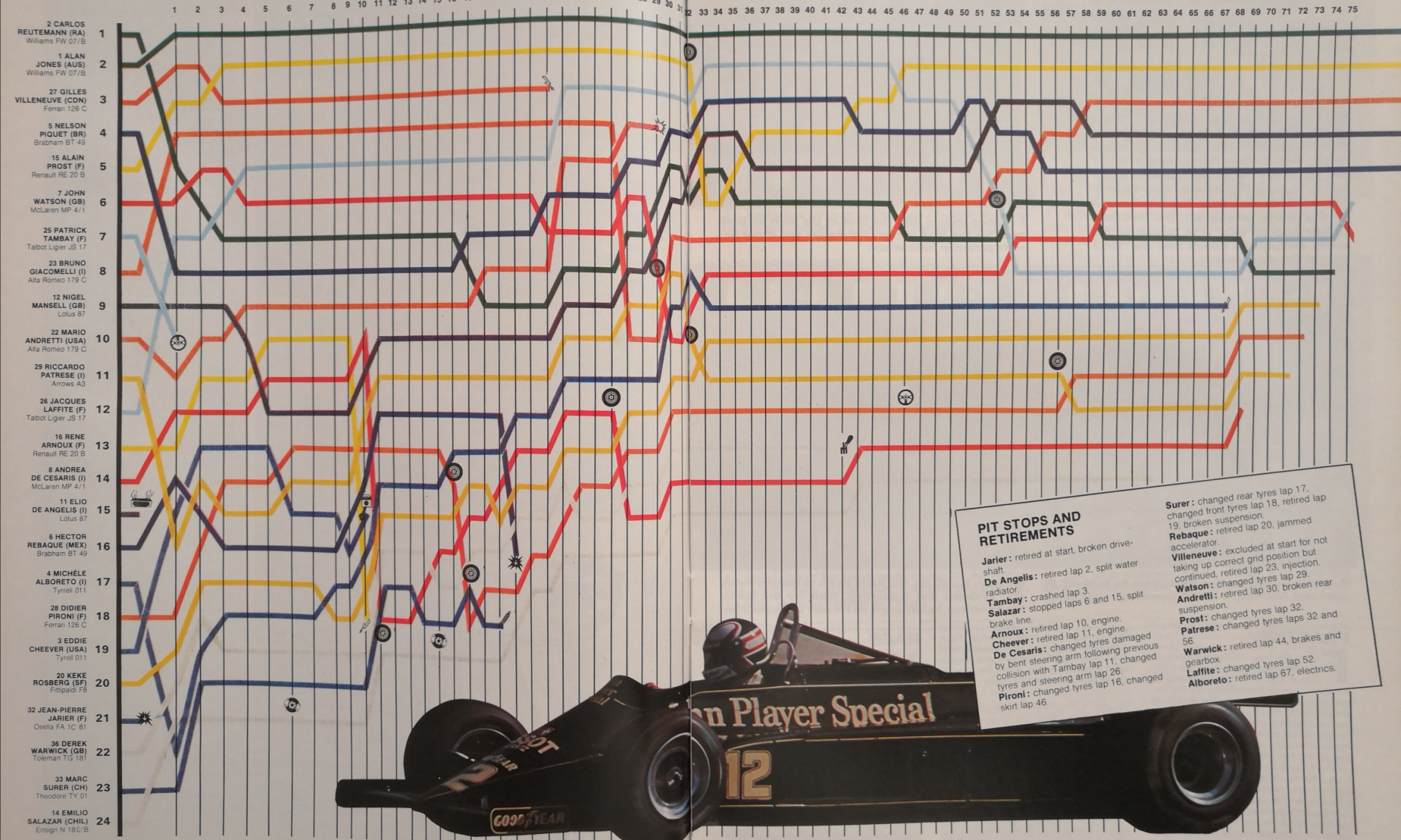
Lap by lap - Giro per giro - Runde um Runde - Tour par tour - Vuelta a vuelta - Ronde



PIT STOPS AND RETIREMENTS

Jarier: retired at start, broken drive-shaft.
De Angelis: retired lap 2, split water radiator.
Tambay: crashed lap 3.
Salazar: stopped laps 6 and 15, split brake line.
Arnoux: retired lap 10, engine.
Cheever: retired lap 11, engine.
De Cesaris: changed tyres damaged by bent steering arm following previous collision with Tambay lap 11, changed tyres and steering arm lap 26.
Pironi: changed tyres lap 16, changed skirt lap 46.
Surer: changed rear tyres lap 17, changed front tyres lap 18, retired lap 19, broken suspension.
Rebaque: retired lap 20, jammed accelerator.
Villeneuve: excluded at start for not taking up correct grid position but continued, retired lap 23, injection.
Watson: changed tyres lap 29.
Andretti: retired lap 30, broken rear suspension.
Prost: changed tyres lap 32.
Patrese: changed tyres laps 32 and 56.
Warwick: retired lap 44, brakes and gearbox.
Laffite: changed tyres lap 52.
Alboreto: retired lap 67, electrics.

Giro per giro - Runde um Runde - Tour par tour - Vuelta a vuelta - Ronde na ronde - La

THE FILM OF THE RACE

Alan Jones led the Caesars Palace Grand Prix from flag to flag, confirming the Williams team's practice form. But Carlos Reutemann's FW07 did not enjoy the same reliability as Jones's. Nelson Piquet may only have finished fifth, but with Reutemann out of the points altogether, the Brabham driver scored two vital points which were enough to clinch him the 1982 World Championship.

1 →

1 - Jones shoots into the lead at the start as they head for the first corner. Villeneuve and Prost demote poleman Reutemann

2 →

2 - Jones has already pulled away from Villeneuve on the second lap. He totally dominates the race

3 →

3 - Behind Jones and Prost, Villeneuve holds up the rest. A queue forms behind the Ferrari, led by Giacomelli, Laffite and Watson

4 →

4 - Reutemann, further back, tries to hold off Piquet and Andretti, but both drivers will overtake

5 →

5 - From lap 20 on, the Alfas begin to feature strongly. Andretti and Giacomelli fight for 4th place. Mario retires, but Bruno is on his way to the podium

6 →

6 - Prost pitted for fresh tyres on lap 32. He restarted in 6th place, but was back in 2nd place within 14 laps. Here he overtakes Piquet

7 →

7 - The title changes hands. Jones has won the race, Piquet the title. Understandably, they're both delighted

PRACTICE

From the first qualifying session on Thursday afternoon, it was obvious that the Williams would be the cars to beat. Reutemann set the fastest time in front of Jones. The Argentine was the only driver to break the 1m 18s barrier, lapping in 1m 17.821s. It was good enough to win Carlos pole position, for even though Jones broke the 1m 18s barrier the next day, it wasn't by a sufficient margin to beat his teammate's time. Even so, both Williams drivers' persistent rival, Nelson Piquet, was only fifth fastest after the first session. Prost and Villeneuve seperated the Brabham driver from the Williams. The next day, Renault, Ferrari and Brabham fought for third fastest time. Piquet was quickest early in the session with 1m 18.161s, but then Villeneuve lapped a tenth of a second quicker. Prost slipped from third fastest on Thursday to fifth on Friday. His qualifiers were fitted too late in the session, and practice ended before he set what he thought would be a pole-winning time.

Jacques Laffite, the third World Championship contender, could do no better than 12th on the grid. He'd been tenth after the first session, but was unhappy with his Ligier's performance. He took over Tambay's JS17 the next day, and even though he found it better, rather than improve his grid position, he dropped two places.

Behind the favourites, Watson's McLaren and the two Alfa Romeos looked promising outsiders. Finally, Derek Warwick qualified for his first Grand Prix in 22nd place in the Toleman.

RACE

When the green light came on, Jones made a superb and shot straight into the lead, while teammate Reutemann lost all the advantage of starting from pole position. Villeneuve made a good start and held second place. At the end of the first lap, Jones led from Villeneuve, Prost, Giacomelli (an excellent start) Reutemann (a mediocre start), Watson, Laffite and Piquet.

Jones immediately began to pull away from the rest, with the help of Villeneuve who was holding up the rest. He was closely challenged by Prost and Giacomelli battling for second place, while further back came a group comprising Watson, Laffite, Reutemann and Piquet, battling for fifth place.

On the third lap, Prost made a superb overtaking manoeuvre and passed Villeneuve. Would the Renault catch the flying Jones? No, the gap between the two cars remained stable. Giacomelli was now trying to overtake Villeneuve, but he was soon closely followed by Laffite and Watson who had caught up the slow-cornering Ferrari. Three seconds behind this group was an equally fraught and important battle: Reutemann tried to hold off Piquet and Andretti. Mansell tenth, watched this battle from a little further back.

There were no order changes for a while, but the gap grew between Jones and Prost, and between Prost and 'Villeneuve's queue.' Piquet and Andretti began to enliven the race from the 17th lap, at Reutemann's expense. Nelson moved up to seventh place in front of Carlos, and Mario relegated him further a lap later. On the 22nd lap, Piquet overtook Watson for sixth place: he was now in a championship-winning position.

But another championship contender was also in a good position: Laffite had overtaken Giacomelli, and when Villeneuve retired on the 26th lap, Laffite found himself in third place. Giacomelli, in fourth, led teammate Andretti. The American had overtaken both Watson and Piquet in quick succession, and when Bruno spun shortly afterwards, Andretti moved up to fourth.

The big surprise at half distance was when Prost suddenly arrived in the pits for fresh tyres. That left Laffite in second place. So where were Piquet and Reutemann now? The Brazilian had inherited third place when Andretti retired on the 30th lap with broken rear suspension. Reutemann had lost one place to Mansell, but had inherited another when Watson pitted for new tyres. He lay fifth, but Piquet was still the man who looked the most likely championship winner.

Jones was untouchable at the front. Behind him, Prost, on his new tyres, and Giacomelli, after his spin, were the drivers to watch. On the 46th lap, only 14 laps after his tyre change, Prost regained his second place. Laffite, meanwhile, was in tyre trouble now, and stopped for a new set on the 52nd lap. Mansell inherited third in front of Piquet and Giacomelli, but the Alfa driver was still recovering from his spin. By the end of the race, he'd overtaken both Mansell and the future World Champion to claim third place and a place on the rostrum.

So Jones won in superbly dominating style, leading home Prost, Giacomelli, Mansell, Piquet and Laffite, who passed Watson right at the end and claimed a point for sixth place. Reutemann, eighth, had been left far behind. □

GILLES CHARGES... IN VAIN

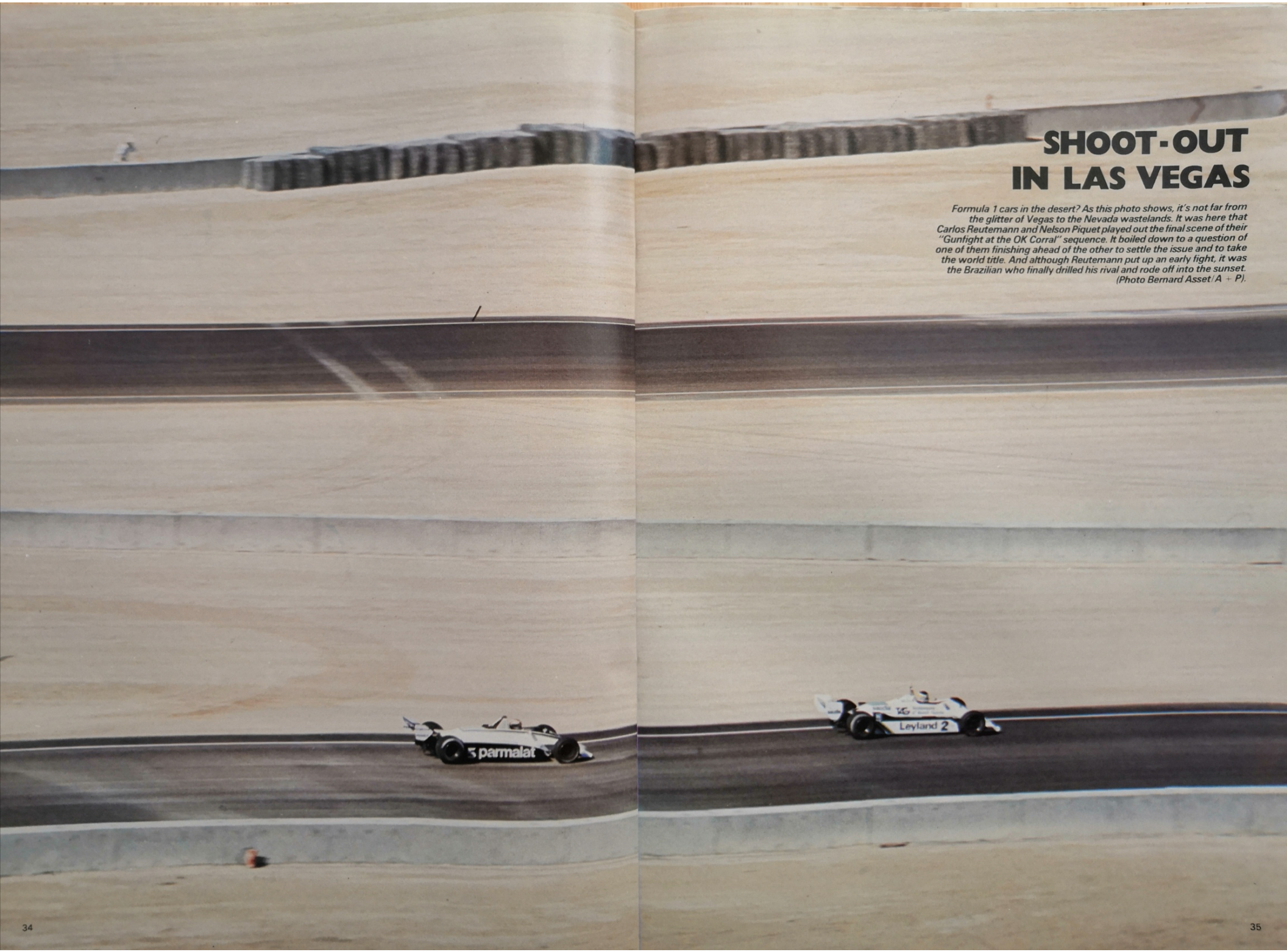
Foot hard down, Gilles Villeneuve charges into the Vegas pitlane: it's lap 23 and once again his Ferrari is in trouble. Despite the Canadian's efforts, he's due for yet more disappointment, for a fuel injection problem has brought him in after he had managed to hold several faster cars behind his Ferrari 126CK in 3rd place. And even that was to be in vain, for immediately after the start the Stewards decided to disqualify him for deliberately starting with his "left front wheel outside the starting box" on the grid.

THE FINAL GRID

The grid for the final GP of the year lined up with the two Williams on the front row, with Villeneuve's Ferrari and Piquet's Brabham just behind.
Jones rocketed away when the light went green, leaving Reutemann to be swallowed up by Prost and Villeneuve. And Carlos had chosen the right hand side because he thought it would help him get away faster...
(Photos Bernard Asset/A + P - Jacques Cochin).

ALAN'S DILEMMA: WILL HE OR WON'T HE?

Has Alan Jones decided not to retire from F1 racing after all? Or was Las Vegas his last Grand Prix? If it was indeed his last GP, it was a memorable goodbye. Driving as aggressively as ever, Alan was at his brilliant best and giving the race everything he had. A well-deserved victory awaited him... but will it be his last?



SHOOT-OUT IN LAS VEGAS

Formula 1 cars in the desert? As this photo shows, it's not far from the glitter of Vegas to the Nevada wastelands. It was here that Carlos Reutemann and Nelson Piquet played out the final scene of their "Gunfight at the OK Corral" sequence. It boiled down to a question of one of them finishing ahead of the other to settle the issue and to take the world title. And although Reutemann put up an early fight, it was the Brazilian who finally drilled his rival and rode off into the sunset. (Photo Bernard Asset/A + P).

THE FROG'S LAST CROAK

The last remaining Frog with a chance of taking the world championship was Jacques Laffite. He didn't quite pull it off at Vegas, but at least he tried. After a terrific start he worked his way up to 2nd place before stopping (perhaps a few laps late) for fresh tyres. His rush back through the field gave him 6th place (at John Watson's expense) on the last lap, at the last corner.
(Photos Eric Vargiolu/DPPI - Thierry Bovy/DPPI - Bernard Asset/A + P).

FACE TO FACE

ALAIN PROST

It's rare for team managers, drivers and press to agree on anything in Formula 1. Yet for everyone who's watched him in 1981, there is no argument that Alain Prost has emerged as Grand Prix racing's Rookie of the Year, even if technically this has been his second full season of F1. His maturity and intelligence, coupled with an outstanding talent for driving consistently quickly under all circumstances, mark him out for future fame. But since an interview is not an opportunity to flatter a driver, I took the opportunity to ask him some contentious questions. And Prost, as usual, provided some fascinating replies.

by Eric BHAT

At the beginning of the year, you said that you would be World Champion. You haven't won the championship, so don't you think it was conceited of you think that you would win it?

That's a tough start! No, I don't think it was conceit. I really thought it was possible. Look at my results in the second half of the season. I could have won the championship. I led at Silverstone, at Hockenheim and at Osterreichring. If I'd had some luck and won those races, I would have been World Champion, even though I had such a bad first half to the season. We had a lot of bad luck in the first few races, and when the new car arrived, we had to make it competitive. Once we'd done that, I won some races, but I also lost some that I could have won. I finished the season in the top six, and I think that's good.

Throughout this season, you've said "we didn't win this one, but we'll win the next." Was this optimism or confidence?

It was confidence, not optimism. I find it quite logical to say that we'll win the next race when we've just lost the previous one. Of course, you can't win a championship talking in "ifs" all the time, and counting on good and bad luck. Even so, René and I had a lot of bad luck at the start of the year. We were often involved in other people's accidents. I call that bad luck. But when you talk about luck, there are times when you have to take good luck into account too. For exemple, Jacques Laffite has had quite a good year, but he's also had a lot of good luck. He was only tenth in practice at Montreal, but circumstances dictated that he won the race, even though the Ligier wasn't a winning car that day. That's good luck. I was unlucky enough to have trouble on three occasions when I was leading a race. If I'd had those problems at the start of the year whenIhad no chance of winning, that would have been much better.

So do you feel that Renault lost the World Championship rather than Alain Prost? Some people say that the team is unbeatable.

No, I think Renault have had as little luck as I have. I made a mistake in Spain, and that cost me at least four points. Otherwise, I don't think I've made any mistakes this year. But the team hasn't had any good luck. What I said before concerns Renault as much as it does Alain Prost. Only one team wins the title at the end of the year. We didn't manage to put together a winning combination this year, and bad luck played its part. We'll try to put things right next year.

You seem to be very conscious of the team when you're talking. Are you involved with the team to the extent that you've lost some of your own individuality?

No. Firstly, I have a good working relationship with the team members in that I am grateful for everything, the maximum, they do for me. Secondly, I've never felt so close to a team. With McLaren last year, I always spoke of myself, because I felt left out. The car was not competitive, and it was often dangerous as well. I felt that I could have done a lot better, but the car wasn't good enough. I never talked about the team, that was of secondary importance. My efforts weren't reciprocated. This year, I'm part of the team, and I feel that they're doing what they can for me. When I talk of myself, I talk of the team. It's no hassle: it's natural and sincere. I think of the car, the mechanics and the team. I don't think I could win Grands Prix without their back-up, and I hope they think the same of me.

Might it be a fact that you have to think like this because you're driving for a major car constructor?

No, not really. As I said a moment ago, it comes quite naturally, without thinking about it. Before I joined Renault, a lot of people said that it would be difficult. I'd have to check myself and make sure I didn't say anything I shouldn't. But that hasn't been a problem. Quite simply, I don't bad-mouth them because I don't think badly of them. The day I feel badly about them, I'll say so. I've always been straightforward. There's no problem at the moment. I feel part of the team.

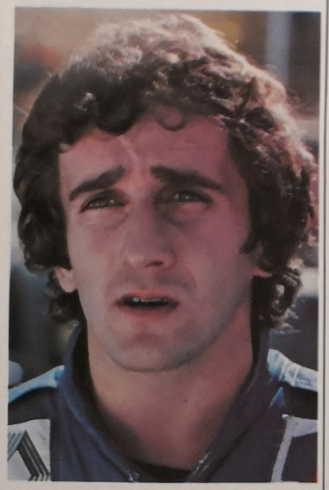
When Ferrari won two races in a row, at Monaco and Jarama, was your confidence shaken? Didn't you feel that Renault might have been the wrong choice?

No, I never felt that. I'll be honest with you. Obviously, when Ferrari won those two races, I began to wonder. But my conclusion wasn't the same as other's. Some people said that Renault had been in Formula 1 for four years. Ferrari had just brought out their turbo engine and had won on two tight circuits. That, they said, showed that Renault couldn't build an engine, or a car, or both. My own view

was different. I admitted that Ferrari had succeeded in making a reliable and competitive engine in a short space of time, but that certainly didn't mean that they were eclipsing Renault. At that time we were running a new car. Very soon afterwards, we proved that our car was more competitive than the Ferrari. You have to appreciate that Villeneuve's wins at Monaco and Jarama were achieved in unusual circumstances. Villeneuve drove well, but he had a certain amount of luck. You can't say the same of my three wins.

Let's talk about the winter of 1980/1981. McLaren had brought you into Formula 1 and you had a contract with the team for 1981. But you decided to break that contract. Was that the right way to behave?

It wasn't a moral thing to do, but it was thanks to Marlboro, not McLaren, that I was in Formula 1. I musk say that I still have a good relationship with McLaren. That, in itself, is a surprise even for me, because at the end of last year I thought we'd never be on speaking terms again. I'm happy as well as surprised. But having said that, I repeat that is was because of Marlboro that I first drove a McLaren. And I'm still sponsored by Marlboro, so I didn't behave badly in breaking the contract.



Your first win in the French Grand Prix was under rather strange circumstances. Do you think it was a genuine win?

Yes, it wasn't complicated, because a win is always a win. Gilles's wins in Monaco and Spain may have been achieved under strange circumstances, but I never said that they weren't real wins, almost the opposite. I think my win at Dijon was similar. I didn't win because luck was on my side. I was second when the race was stopped. Piquet wasn't going to finish the race, that was obvious. First of all, his front left tyre had gone off, and he was going to have to stop to change it. Herbie Blash, Brabham's team menager, told me that. Everyone in the Brabham team knew it, and Gordon Murray was the first to realise it. Nelson would have stopped a few laps later. Secondly, he had problems with his throttle cable. The battle for the lead would have been between John Watson and me, as it was during the second half of the race.

Yes, but you would have had less turbo pressure, surely?

The mechanics adjusted the turbo pressure because we always try to run with as much turbo pressure as possible, but we couldn't turn it up too much for 20 laps. You break engines that way. You can turn up the boost for a couple of laps, but not for 20. The most important thing we did was to fit softer tyres, as did Watson and most of the other Michelin drivers.

The British teams are always saying that it's quite easy to win with 600 bhp.

I don't know how much power we have. If we do have 600 bhp, then we have more problems trying to set up our chassis than the British: if you have a power advantage, it's nothing unless you can put that power on the road. We do have an advantage on quick circuits. But it's not fair to reproach us for our extra power. When Renault first came into Formula 1, everyone — and the British were the first — said that it was crazy, a dream. Now they're saying that it's easy to win with a turbo, and that they should be banned. But they won't take the same risks and undertake the long development task. It doesn't seem to matter to our critics that we win on quick circuits, but the Ford-powered cars win on the tight ones because they're lighter and more manœuvrable. Each type of car has its advantage. Should the turbo be banned for that reason?

You just failed to pull off wins at Silverstone, Hockenheim and Osterreichring. After each race, you seemed more impatient to win. Do you not feel that you'd like to change teams?

Not at all. I had a relatively by minor problem each time I led those races, and they weren't problems that I could blame on the team. The valve fault at Silverstone was a manufacturing failure. The limiter was wrongly adjusted in Hockenheim, and the front suspension gave trouble at Osterreichring. Honestly, those problems aren't going to make me want to change teams. At no time did I feel that I wanted to leave Renault. Deep down, I knew that I wanted to stay with the team. The only thing I felt was that my status might have been a little different this year. I wanted to be number one driver, or at least equal number one, in order to feel free of certain problems. Otherwise, everything was straightforward. The proof of that is that I signed for next year early in the season, while I might have waited for a better offer.

Have you had other offers for next year?

Yes, from certain top British and French teams. I think that's a fairly direct answer...

It's said that you have been fairly demanding in your terms to stay with Renault. Does money mean a lot to you?

I don't know who has said that, because I don't think I've been very hard in my bargaining. I don't think any one has been in a position to say that. I think they've been rather hasty in their judgement. I could have earned more by changing teams. But I wanted to stay where I was. At no time did I try to push up the price. I didn't want to get involved in that sort of bargaining. I'm 26 years old. I think I've got a lot of racing ahead of me. I can earn my money in the furute.

Apparently you've often been angry during practice because you've felt that you've been held back. Is that true?

I don't think "held back" is quite the right expression. I think that there have been times when circumstances have been against me, which has meant that René has been on pole more times than I have. If I've been angry on occasions, it's because it's part of my character. I could have been quicker and taken pole position in England for instance, if they'd readjusted my rev limiter. But when I thought about it a couple of hours later, I realised that I'd been wrong to lose my temper. Gérard Larrousse was right, and I was wrong. Perhaps I've been slightly unpredictable on occasions, but I analyse my own behaviour. I know that if something like that happens, I will react in the same way. That's the way I am.

Drivers are said to be aggressive, even ill-natured? Do you hide this side of your character?

I'm not ill-natured, but I'm not easy-going either. I'm friendly enough, I like to chat with people, and joke with them, especially when I'm relaxed. But if I have a problem, on the other hand, I don't like people to joke about it. I'm not going to hit someone because of it, although I used to lose my temper when I was karting. I hit people on a number of occasions at that time. I've calmed down since then. I can control myself now. I don't show that I'm aggressive, except on the track. I don't think I'm thought of as an easy driver to race against.

Have you had any trouble getting used to the considerable number of technicians in the Renault team?

No. I knew almost everyone in the team from the time that I was racing in Formula 3. Anyway, that's one of the reasons why I wanted to join Renault. Obviously it's a tremendous advantage, technically speaking, but on top of that, it's a French team. It's obviously much easier to communicate with French-speaking people. I like driving in Formula 1 as a job and as a sport. But it wasn't easy for me last year. I had to push myself, I didn't feel at home, I couldn't communicate easily. Once practice was finished, I didn't feel that I was part of the team. The atmosphere is obviously much better at Renault where I can communicate, and there are other advantages.

Since your wins in Holland and Italy, people have been comparing you to some of the great drivers in motor racing. Don't you feel that there's a risk of you becoming big-headed?

No, I don't think so. I had the same kind of comments made of me when I won 12 Formula Renault races in one year. Even then, people were talking of me as though I was a super-star, but it didn't make me big-headed. And I was only 20 at the time. So this kind of talk isn't going to make any difference now.

Your wife, Anne-Marie, never comes to races. She's just given birth to your first child, a son, yet you don't talk about him often. You seem to be completely cut off from your family when you come to F1 races.

Yes, I live two lives: my professional life, and my family life. I always go to Formula 1 races alone. It's my job, I don't need anyone else. I don't need outside help. I feel better doing the job by myself.

Isn't that very egoistic?

No, I don't think so. Ever since I started racing, I've struggled on my own. I've often needed help, but I've never wanted to seek it from someone else. I still feel the same. I like to be alone when I'm doing something, because it allows me to concentrate harder on the job. Anyway, I don't like to have someone to look after, particularly at Grands Prix. Furthermore, my wife works, she doesn't like to come to the races, so it's a convenient arrangement. As for my son, I think he's going to be in Formula 3 next year!

Will Alain Prost be World Champion in 1982?

I won't be conceited, I'll settle for a place in the top ten! □

THE NEON SUNSHINE OF VEGAS

You don't have to be an expert in probability theory to know that only through the looking glass could you have a Grand Prix in Las Vegas. This utterly improbable town built on desert sand is the home of fantasy, the bedroom of the world and headquarters for the biggest dream of them all: getting rich quick without doing anything more than dropping a silver dollar in a slot and pulling a metal arm. You drop the world of Formula 1 into what Henry Miller called the Air-Conditioned Nightmare and you're asking for peculiarity.

by Keith BOTSFORD

The Formula 1 Family is a portable and highly adaptable social organism. It knows how to set up its own laws and all it ever does, anywhere in the world, is pitch its tent in the best possible place and carry on an usual. The upper echelons are miles beyond being merely blasé; they have gone through being jaded and come out the other side just pretending their surroundings do not exist. Reality is for others.

The reality of Las Vegas, however, is in doubt. Any town whose Yellow Pages in the phone book show more pages for hookers (pardon me, escorts) than banks is in some special sort of trouble. Las Vegas being America (more or less), there are at least statistics: 9,000 peddlars of flesh, 95 murders through September and an annual turnover, in cash, up towards the billion-dollar mark.

I can't tell you how drivers react to a Roman banquet where the menu is printed on tablets as big as Moses giving the law, all in Latin (not always correct), and girls pouring wine over your shoulder from amphorae, but I find it distinctly distracting. Is Formula 1 just, another event in the Circus Maximus? Are drivers puzzled at dining in an artificial version of the ocean depths, serenaded by a straight-backed lady harpist on an electric white swan? Probably not. Formula 1 drivers are imperturbable. Some of them are also inscrutable. Carlos Reutemann, on the eve of his moment of decision, was still slouching around the paddock in his eternal blue track suit: was he **really** in Las Vegas, or in some private corner of his mind?

Mind you, there were times when it was hard to imagine that this championship belonged to the drivers, the teams or the family itself. That was because we're now looking at the sport of the future, a sort of American telly event, in which everything we have known as the sport is transformed into something else. That looking-glass effect. In the case of Las Vegas, a media event squeezed between baseball games for a public that neither knows very much, nor cares greatly. The ultimate power of television over the sport was never better illustrated than by the supine way in which the race organizers (and the FIA which is supposed to be our watchdog) acquiesced to the race being postponed half-hour "at the request of NBC."

But in this stretch of fairy-land acreage in the middle of nowhere, ruled by the right wing, the hidden money and Cosa Nostra, and populated either by the old, fat and retired or the very young on the make, television is a natural. Just as Las Vegas hotels have no clocks on any of their walls and their lobbies are dark grottos where weary housewives still sit at six a.m. pouring their dream dollars into the slots, television is organized to **sell** a sport. American commentators do not stop in their relentless pursuit **of the hype**. In between commercials they deliver commercials for the sport they are covering.

For the Formula 1 Family, is has all been, I suspect, a bit much. Being both public and private beings, and carrying their sport around on their backs through the year, they are used to a different ambience, and certainly not used to the level of inanity they have sometimes had to face: is racing dangerous? how fast do you go? That sort of thing. It drives them up the wall. But, as I've said, most of the teams seem to have pretended that Vegas doesn't really exist. They've gone over the Grand Canyon in planes, they've played golf out on the dunes, they've gone to the shows and had spotlights shone on them and they've sought refuge in the paddock as though that at least was something familiar.

As for gambling, most of them do enough of that in their professions. And those that think they don't also have the Grand Prix driver's strong dislike of putting their pennies to work without a sure return. Or spending money at all, for a form of avarice is very much part of the Family's psyche. It is understandable if you live in a world with not that many tomorrows.

If the paddock and the motor-homes and the familiar faces are assuring, I doubt that they found the track so. A driver going around the three-fingered glove in this giant parking lot is simply a low-slung projectile hurtling through a landscape utterly without distinguishing features. And drivers need features to measure the distance to braking, to know one curve from another. Here, all they have is a maze made of ten-ton concrete blocks. If a ballet dancer pirouetted on stage without keeping his eyes on one distinguishable point, he would get dizzy. Here the drivers simply get car-sick.

But I have forgetten, of course, the one major gamble of Las Vegas, which this year has replaced Monza as the sport's cattle market. Every year the sport goes through its oriental bazaar phase, swopping flesh for flesh in hotel suite or motor home. And this year, due to the fact that decision time has come only by the very last race of the season, the market place has been unusually animated. Up on top of Caesars Palace, for instance, a huge edifice in what a friend of mine once described as **"Cuspidor Modern"**, Frank Williams and his Arab princes (three suites and a few turned away) must have been among the chief bargainers. Was Carlos their champion? Was Jones really quitting? (Answer: well, quitting Williams certainly. Well, almost certainly. Unless Carlos left. Etc, etc.) It begins to resemble one of those indecisive press conferences in which seekers after fact are reduced to quoting taxi drivers as "authorized sources."

And the French were incensed that Eddie Cheever should drive for Ligier. And the Italians incensed... well, because was it true that Ferrari had offered a million to Jones? The hardest thing was to keep anyone's mind on the business at hand. Seasons come down to a weary end and, for some, the zest had gone out of the season long ago. For those, only the sun, the long-legged beauties (how much? how clean?) and the available cash were a consolation. But could anyone guarantee the sun was real? □

Las Vegas, the gambling centre of the world, even tempted some of the Formula 1 men. But while some may have had success on the track, they usually lost at the tables.

ALAN'S FAREWELL VICTORY

Will we see that white helmet poking from a Formula 1 cockpit again? The man himself isn't sure. The answer may come from Australia, or South Africa. (Photo : Bernard Asset/A P)

Is he going to guit FI? Or will he stay? Alan Jones evades the question constantly, which suggests that he's already having second thoughts. In the meantime, at Las Vegas, he showed that he hasn't stopped trying. He has plainly lost nothing of his appetite for driving... nor for being outspoken when the occasion demands.

by Mike DOODSON

On the day that Alan Jones arrived in Las Vegas, the odds against his name on the list that appeared in the casino opposite his hotel were 8 to 1. The following morning, they were at 4 to 1, and they continued to get narrower all week end. Much of this was due to the early heavy betting by mechanics and team managers, although it is likely that the odds-makers had also seen the look of determination on Alan's face.

Even though his chances of the 1981 world championship had been crushed at Montreal, this was not just another race for Alan Jones. It was due to be the last GP of his career in Formula 1, and it had been far too long since he had won nine points from a championship round. In fact, it had been seven months earlier, at Long Beach, that he had stepped on to the top of the podium. But this season's results have hardly been a fair indication of Alan's worth. He himself had made two or three driving errors which had cost him races (notably at Imola and Jarama), while the stupid fuel feed problems experienced with his car had cost him vital

Alan Jones finished the season as he started it: with a win in the United States. He totally dominated the race (Photo: Bernard Asset/A P)

points at Monaco and Hockenheim, on both occasions when he was leading comfortably with the flag virtually within sight.

Setting aside any question of whether Alan was seriously intending to go through with his announced decision to retire from F1 racing in 1982, he had several remaining ambitions to fulfil in Las Vegas. One of them was to beat Carlos Reutemann, the team mate who has been his nemesis throughout this season — and and where better to do it than here, where the full attention of the Argentine press was focussed on the man who led the world championship?

But Alan wanted also to do something which no recent retiring F1 driver had ever achieved: he wanted to show that his heart had been in driving right up to his very last race. That had clearly not been the case with Scheckter, Hunt, Fittipaldi and Lauda, the last four champions to retire. Not even Stewart or Fangio had been able to pull it off. *"I think I'm capable of doing it,"* Alan had said a Montreal, where he had led magnificently until superior tyre-power took over. *"And without the pressures of the world championship, I think I'm going to be in good shape for a win at Vegas."*

True to his promise, he set fastest time in the unofficial circuit-opening time trials on Wednesday. But in Thursday's official session he was eclipsed by a brilliant Reutemann, and again on Friday, when a broken valve spring on the engine in his T car forced him to bolt his quallies on to the race car and try to get pole position with that. He failed by 17 hundredths of a second: *"the T car was better,"* he said in his pit as the session ended: *"it's lighter, the engine is more powerful and it's got some other tweaks which could have given me pole position, I'm sure."*

At that moment, Brabham designer Gordon Murray stepped from the next door pit area and grinned at Alan. *"Slipped in a good one there, didn't you?"* he said: *"you must have had Carlos shaking at his knees."* Alan didn't reply, for it is likely that Murray was indulging in a bit of mild winding-up. But it was already obvious that the tension that had been created between Alan and Carlos by the pit-signal incident in Brazil was, if anything, greater here than it had been all year. Alan may have been irritated by all the attention which Carlos was attracting, for he replied with a cruel remark when pressed for his opinion of Carlos by an Argentine journalist. *"Carlos should never have been a racing driver,"* he said of the good-looking man from Santa Fe: *"he might have done better to have gone in for the Miss Argentina contest instead."* Jealousy, perhaps?

Indeed, Alan appeared to have reserved his venom solely for Reutemann, for he managed to be good humoured about an incident in final qualifying with Jacques Laffitte which cost him valuable time on a "hot" lap. *"I arrived at the apex of a corner at exactly the same moment as he did... and since I'm always criticising other drivers for doing that to me, I suppose I can't complain."*

The following morning, after the warm-up, personal vendettas were forgotten as the entire Williams team got their heads together in their motorhome to discuss tyres. On Wednesday and Thursday, the abrasive and untested new circuit had taken its toll on the Goodyear runners. Although the American company had been able to fly in two more hard compound varieties of tyre from Akron, there was a second a lap difference between them in the warm-up, in which Watson's Michelin-shod McLaren had been quickest. *"We tried to run the softer compound all round,"* said Reutemann's engineer Neil Oatley, *"but that would have been too risky. We decided to put the hardest compound on the right rear of both our cars because that's the tyre that takes most of the punishment here."*

With the two Williams drivers on the front row of the grid, it was not difficult to foresee a bit of bumping and barging. Jones doesn't hesitate to go for gaps that may appear at the start, and at least twice this year his car has come into contact with Carlos's before they've arrived at the first turn. At Las Vegas, however, Carlos made the extraordinary decision to start from the outside berth on the grid, evidently because he was worried that sand or debris on the inside for the first left-hand corner might make braking hazardous.

The decision came as a nasty surprise to the race organisers, who had to arrange for the grid markings to be repainted overnight. For Alan Jones, though, it was just the break he needed. *"I was surprised and delighted,"* he said: *"I can't imagine why the hell he did something like that. As usual, he wasn't particularly quick at the start, which left a nice hole for me to go through."*

Alan arrived at the first corner out in front of the race and immediately started to establish a comfortable lead. He was driving as well, if not better, than in any race this year, demoralising his would-be pursuers by taking a second a lap off them for the first eight laps. He had the Williams on a knife edge at that stage, braking late for all those tight corners and fighting the power oversteer with slashes of opposite-lock. Rare is the driver these days who chooses to race like that for more than two laps in succession: Alan was doing it for the sheer joy of driving, anticipating that it would not be long before the nine or ten left-hand corners started to take their toll on the participants' necks, including his own.

Sure enough, before half distance it was clear that the g-forces in the left-handers were taking effect. His own pit could see Alan's head lolling almost uncontrollably as he accelerated out of the final turn. *"It was tough,"* he said, *"because my right hand was blistered by the gearchanges and I'm still having a bit of trouble with the finger which I broke before Monza. But I was able to back off for the last half of the race, in fact I reckon I could have gone 1.5 seconds a lap quicker if necessary."* □

PROST *Scriptum*

If you're a regular reader, you'll know by now that I live in Saint-Chamond, near St Etienne in France. So you'll understand why I felt somewhat disorientated when I arrived in Las Vegas to spend the week of the Grand Prix in the town. And having visited the place, I can assure you that I have no wish to settle there.

I found the town itself rather disappointing. Sure, it's a kind of special symbol, sitting out there in the middle of the desert all on its own. But the neon-lit, slot machine world is not for me. As far as I'm concerned, one week in Las Vegas was quite enough. Apart from playing the tables, there's nothing to do. You either put your money on the line, or you get bored.

I suppose I should have expected it. Vegas-it's smarter than saying Las Vegas-lived up to its reputation. It was no better nor worse than people said it would be. You have to look on the place as a monument or a freak town. Spend a couple of hours there, take a few photographs, lose a few dollars, and get back to civilisation again.

Everything is orientated around gambling. I must admit that I tried a little roulette as did most of the other drivers. I'm not a great gambler but to go to Las Vegas without gambling is like going to Paris and not seeing the Eiffel Tower, or St Chamond and not seeing my flat (whoops, on second thoughts I think I'll retract that statement for fear of traffic jams in the street outside!) Anyway, I put my money down and would you believe I won? Yes, I took some money off them. So the French did win something in Las Vegas!

But I must admit that I wasn't tempted to continue. The Auvergne area has the same reputation as Scotland when it comes to spending money. But seriously, I simply didn't like the atmosphere at the tables. I found it quite amusing to gamble for half an hour at roulette. But everyone else was so serious and sad. They weren't there to have fun, but to win money. Their eyes would light up every time money fell out of the slot machine. They never smiled whether they were welded to a slot machine or counting every penny on the roulette wheel. I found it odious.

As I mentioned, I played roulette, but when there was no one else at the table. A journalist friend and I had a great time, but when some serious gamblers joined us, the atmosphere was such that we changed tables.

The circuit itself, I think, was a success when you think of what the organisers had to start off with. I was quite surprised. You could overtake relatively easily, contrary to what we expected. And although the safety could be criticised on certain points, the circuit wasn't dangerous we've driven on worse this year. The race itself was strange but interesting. Generally speaking, it was a fair Grand Prix.

I was exhausted at the end of the race, and I wasn't the only one. Monaco used to be the most tiring circuit on the calendar, but I think Las Vegas now holds that title. The track is very bumpy, and there's nowhere that you can relax for a moment. It was good training, but not for the off-season. See you soon!

OK, AYJAY?

Alan Jones

Winning the last Grand Prix of the year at Las Vegas was exactly the way I wanted to leave Formula 1 racing. I want people to remember that when I gave it up I was still the best, still a winner. It would be terrible for me to know that there were people going around saying "he should have given up a long time ago."

I like to feel that I have a racer's make-up. I race for ***me****. And when I put my bum in a car, I want to win. I hope it will be the same for the rest of my career, because a lot of people have overlooked the fact that I'm committed to a couple of Formula Atlantic races, the Australian and Macau GPs, in November, and that I'm planning a full season of touring car events in Australia next year.*

All the journalists in Las Vegas seemed to think that I am about to go back on my decision to retire from Formula 1 racing. But my mind has not changed. I want to go home to Australia, relax with my family, do some riding and think about it objectively without any pressure. If I change my mind, I don't expect to do so until Christmas. By then, a lot of factors may have changed.

There are many things outside Formula 1 which interest me. I love my country and I don't need to earn money from racing anymore because I have so many interests Down Under. Apart from my farm I have a pub, a boat business and a tyre business. That's more than enough to keep me busy.

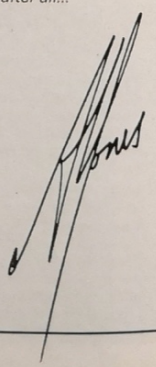
There will be several things about F1 racing which I shall be happy to leave. For example, it's nice to know that I shan't have to go testing my car for a week at some freezing cold circuit when I could be working in the sunshine at home. I shan't miss some of the people who have caused me aggravation over the years.

Nevertheless, I have to be realistic. I know it's going to be hard to stick to my decision to retire, because I think that there's going to be a big temptation for me to come back and take the title away from Nelson Piquet. After all, he only beat me in the end by four points, despite my losing three races or more which should have been mine.

Since Nelson and Jacques Laffite will be arriving in Australia for our GP in November, I have asked them both to come and stay at my farm. I hope I shall be able to take Jacques fishing and introduce him to some of our fine Australian wines. I have promised Nelson the opportunity to do some horse riding ... and I shall be picking out a particularly fierce animal for him to try.

Now that I'm member of the "public," as it were, I shall be following the driver market and winter testing with interest. I was very impressed with the way Alain Prost drove the turbo Renault in Las Vegas because the car didn't really seem suitable for the circuit. Renault may have been helped by the altitude (2200 feet, I was told), but the truth is that there's no substitute for horsepower. Both of the Renault drivers had massive great wings, yet they were getting down the straights as fast as anyone. It looks as though they'll be outpacing everyone next year, although (as I said) a lot of things could change before the season starts. There were rumours going round Las Vegas that all sorts of people might be producing exotic turbo engines for 1982.

For the time being, though, may mind is 90 per cent made up about retirement. When I get back home I plan to spend at least two months away from racing. I want to be a gentleman of leisure and I'm going to give it a go. If it doesn't work out, well I don't think it would be a crime for me to change my mind. I'm only human after all...



TAG WILLIAMS

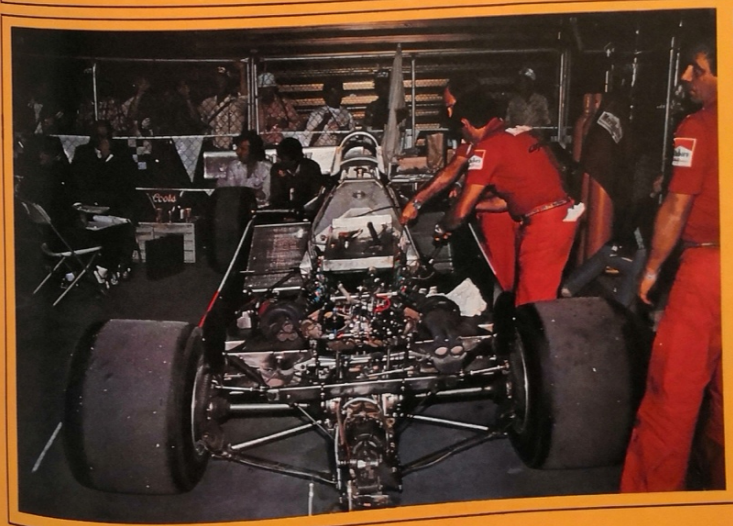
Williams-Ford FW 07C/16:
Alan Jones (AUS)
Williams-Ford FW 07C/17:
Carlos Reutemann (RA)
Williams-Ford FW 07C/15:
Jones's spare
Williams-Ford FW 07C/12:
Reutemann's spare

As in Canada, the spare cars were fitted with a water cooling system for the rear brakes, as the caliper was getting too hot partially due to the aerodynamic shape under the rear end. However, this time the system was transferred to the race machines used by the two drivers. Chassis number 15 was also adapted to take 13 inch front tyres. The spares were lighter than both race FW 07s: there was no adjustable rear anti-roll bar for instance. Reutemann crashed with Piquet during Friday morning's session, and his spare Williams didn't handle satisfactorily again afterwards. For the race, his car was fitted with springs that were 400 pounds stiffer than Jones's, and he was also given a very stiff rear right tyre. However, during the race, he suffered both oversteer and understeer as well as gearbox trouble which lost him the World Championship. Jones also had gearbox trouble, but it didn't stop him leading what could be his final Formula I race from start to finish.

RENAULT ELF

Renault RE 30:
Rene Arnoux (F)
Renault RE 34:
Alain Prost (F)
Renault RE 32:
spare

As well as bringing out chassis RE30 to replace Arnoux's RE33 crashed in Montreal, the team had been busy since the Canadian race. The team's engineers had been to Atlanta to work in the wind tunnel with encouraging results. Recent testing of electronic ignition has also proved promising, but when Arnoux tested with the new ignition during unofficial practice at Las Vegas, it was disappointing and wasn't used again. Arnoux crashed the spare in practice, but his main problem was with handling. Prost finished an excellent second despite a stop for tyres, but Arnoux lost a plug from the engine and retired on the tenth lap. The team members are already optimistic for next year. Amongst their plans is the use of Pete Weismann's gearbox for improved rear end aerodynamics.

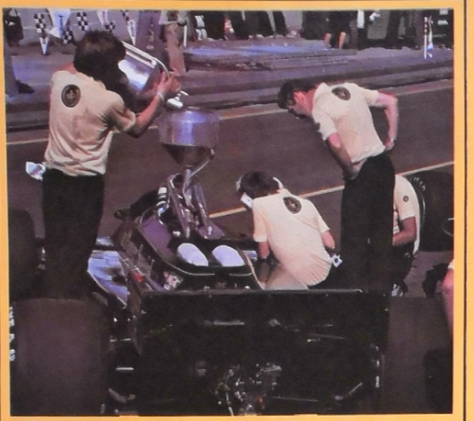


MARLBORO ALFA ROMEO

Alfa Romeo 179 D/06:
Mario Andretti (USA)
Alfa Romeo 179 C/02:
Bruno Giacomelli (I)
Alfa Romeo 179 C/04:
spare

The team hadn't made any changes, but Andretti did a lot of unofficial testing prior to his country's second Grand Prix of the year. The main problem was that the car wasn't quick out of the corners, but both he and Giacomelli were competitive during the race. While Bruno spun but restarted and finished an excellent third, a nut fixing the lower wishbone of the right rear suspension broke on Andretti's Alfa and he parked it at the side of the track. The team's new carbon fibre chassis is due for testing later this month.

Cockpits



JOHN PLAYER TEAM LOTUS

Lotus-Ford 87/3:
Elio de Angelis (I)
Lotus-Ford 87/5:
Nigel Mansell (GB)

Nigel Mansell's Lotus was considerably revised for Las Vegas. The wheelbase was eight centimeters longer thanks to a long bell-housing and spacer, and the rear track was around seven centimeters wider. There were also bigger rear brake ducts and extractors in front of the rear tyres. De Angelis was using a conventional specification 87, and wasn't too happy that Mansell had been given the revised car. De Angelis retired from the race with a split radiator on the second lap, but Mansell finished a good fourth.

TALBOT GITANES

Ligier-Matra JS 17/05:
Jacques Laffitte (F)
Ligier-Matra JS 17/03:
Patrick Tambay (F)
Ligier-Matra JS 17/02:
spare

The only changes made to the Ligiers were new side pods fitted during the first day of practice only. But both drivers prefered side pods which gave more rear downforce, and these were changed for the next day's sessions. Even though the two drivers swopped cars on four separate occasions, Tambay was always the quicker. But he was very lucky to escape with no more than a badly bruised leg when he crashed heavily on the third lap after an earlier brush with de Cesaris. His Ligier's front end was completely destroyed. Laffite, meanwhile, had a better race than practice, getting up to second place, before having to pit for new tyres as did many of the quicker Michelin runners. In the end, he just pipped Watson for sixth place, but it wasn't sufficient to win the World Championship.

PARMALAT BRABHAM

Brabham-Ford BT 49C/15:
Nelson Piquet (BR)
Brabham-Ford BT 49C/12:
Hector Rebaque (MEX)
Brabham-Ford BT 49C/14:
spare

Like Williams, the Brabham team had fitted a rear brake water cooling system to Piquet's car, while the spare, as usual, had carbon fibre brakes. The Brabhams were not suited to the circuit as well as the Williams, despite the use of 13inch front tyres. For the racé, Piquet had stiffer tyres on the right of his BT49 to those on the left, because of the circuit's many left-hand corners. Otherwise, there were no major changes. Piquet finished fifth again, which was good enough to win him the World Championship. Rebaque retired on the 20th lap with a jammed accelerator probably due to sand after he'd gone off the track.

MARLBORO MCLAREN

Marlboro-Ford MP 4/4:
John Watson (GB)
Marlboro-Ford MP 4/1:
Andrea de Cesaris (I)
Marlboro-Ford MP 4/2:
spare

John Watson's Marlboro had been revised. It was fitted with lighter disc brakes and a longer exhaust. Furthermore, it had a long wheelbase thanks to revised front suspension, including a wider track. De Cesaris's car was standard. Watson's main problem during practice was a bad cold, but he figured in the top six during Grand Prix, only to stop for new tyres. Laffite took sixth place from Watson within sight of the flag. De Cesaris touched Tambay and deranged his front suspension. He made two pit stops, the first for tyres, and the second to replace a steering arm, but continued to finish 12th and last.

SEFAC FERRARI

Ferrari 126 C/052:
Gilles Villeneuve (CDN)
Ferrari 126 C/049B:
Didier Pironi (F)
Ferrari 126 C/051B:
spare

Like Renault, Ferrari had to send home for a chassis to replace 050B damaged by Villeneuve in Canada. The replacement chassis should have been 051B, but instead Villeneuve chose 052 as his regular race car for Las Vegas, which had previously been the spare at Montreal. Although, 052 had oversteer, Villeneuve found it better. The Ferrari drivers had new wings to test, but otherwise the main problem was a blown engine in Pironi's car so he used the spare instead. In the race, Villeneuve was excluded at the start, but continued and held up as many as seven other drivers until the fuel injection failed. Pironi stopped once to change tyres and once to change a skirt, but eventually finished ninth and set fastest lap.

FITTIPALDI

Fittipaldi-Ford F8C/03:
Keke Rosberg (SF)
Fittipaldi-Ford F8C/04:
Chico Serra (BR)

The team was unchanged at Las Vegas, with a car each for Rosberg and Serra but no spare. Although Rosberg qualified, he wasn't pleased with the way his Fittipaldi handled, but he succeeded in finishing the race in tenth place. Serra, despite no particular problems, failed to qualify.

RAGNO BETA ARROWS

Arrows-Ford A3/5:
Riccardo Patrese (I)
Arrows-Ford A3/3:
Jacques Villeneuve (CDN)
Arrows-Ford A3/2:
spare

The Arrows line-up was as it had been in Canada, but again, Jacques Villeneuve failed to qualify, despite the use of both his own race A3 and the spare which is fitted with the new specification rear suspension. Patrese wasn't happy with his handling, finding the car too slow almost all round the track, although he did lay some of the blame on Pirelli. During the race, he twice had to stop for tyres, finishing an eventual eleventh out of twelve official finishers.

ENSIGN

Ensign-Ford N 180B/15:
Eliseo Salazar (RCH)

Salazar again qualified, and again on the back row. The Chilean driver had no major problems, and the only change to the car was the addition of rear wing side plates. He made two stops in the race, both times because of brake trouble. In the second stop, a split brake line was discovered and replaced, and Salazar continued, but wasn't classified. The team's new Nigel Bennet-designed chassis has been completed, and a meeting took place at Las Vegas concerning a possible future tie-up between Ensign, Dan Gurney, Essex and Mario Andretti.

Cockpits

TYRRELL

Tyrrell-Ford 011/2:
Eddie Cheever (USA)
Tyrrell-Ford 011/1:
Michele Alboreto (I)
Tyrrell-Ford 010/2:
spare

There were no major changes to the Tyrrells at Las Vegas, although both cars were fitted with the new rear suspension as at Montreal. Furthermore, both Tyrrells had 12 inch front disc brakes. Cheever had engine trouble and was also unhappy with his car's handling, but Alboreto had no major problems. Neither Tyrrell finished the race, Cheever retiring early on with a broken engine, and electrics causing Alboreto's retirement eight laps from home.

CANDY TOLEMAN

Toleman-Hart TG 181/5:
Brian Henton (GB)
Toleman-Hart TG 181/4:
Derek Warwick (GB)
Toleman-Hart TG 181/2:
spare

Neither Tolemans was fitted with the monobloc engine which powered Henton onto the grid at Monza, but by sticking with his own Toleman, Derek Warwick qualified at the end of practice in 22nd place. Henton used both his own car and the spare, but had handling trouble in both. Warwick had an oil leak onto his rear brakes in the race. He slowed the car by using the gearbox, but then that failed and eventually Warwick retired from his first Grand Prix.

THEODORE RACING

Theodore-Ford TY/01:
Marc Surer (CH)

Marc Surer qualified the single Theodore again, but he had an unhappy race. He changed both front and rear tyres in successive stops, and a lap later, he retired with broken suspension.

DENIM OSELLA

Osella-Ford FA1C/01:
Jean-Pierre Jarier (F)
Osella-Ford FA1B/04:
Beppe Gabbiani (I)

The only change to the latest Osella was a new rear wing. Jarier blew one engine in practice and nearly blew another before the team traced the trouble to a faulty oil filter which was preventing oil flowing from the tank. However, Jarier qualified in one official practice session. His race lasted a matter of seconds, as a driveshaft broke as he left the grid. Gabbiani only did one session and then refused to drive as he didn't think his car was satisfactorily prepared.

ATS WHEELS

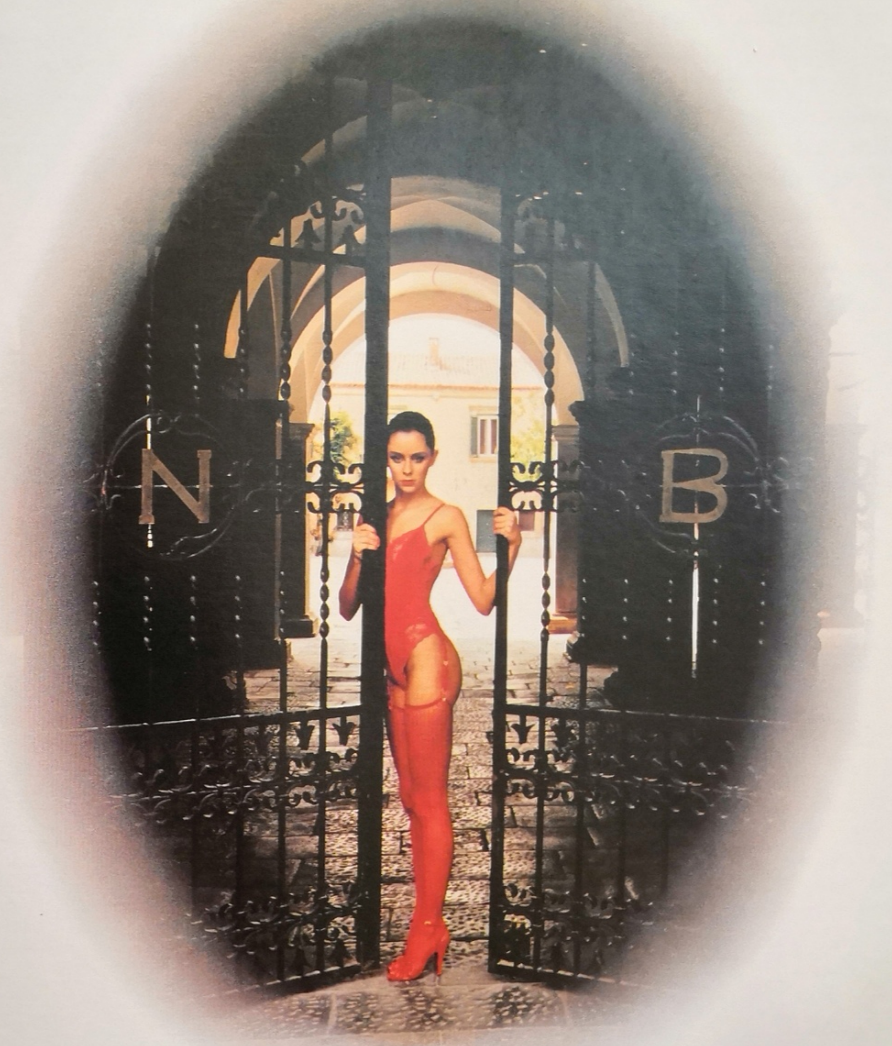
ATS-Ford HGS1/2:
Slim Borgudd (S)
ATS-Ford HGS1/1:
spare

After crashing his race ATS, Borgudd took over the spare car, but found that it didn't handle to his satisfaction. He was unable to correct the fault, and failed to qualify.

MARCH GRAND PRIX

March-Ford 811/06:
Derek Daly (IRL)
March-Ford 811/05:
spare

Brake and gearbox problems upset Daly's first practice session, but the second official session was a real disappointment. Avon's qualifying tyres lasted just one lap, and if a driver hit traffic in that one lap, then that was the end of a set of tyres. Daly set a time good enough for the grid in the morning session, but he never managed to set as quick a lap in the afternoon, and failed to qualify. Chassis number 07 and 08 will be built up for next year's South African Grand Prix, but brand new cars should appear for Long Beach. The team is to test Beppe Gabbiani, Eliseo Salazar and Stefan Johansson at Ricard in November.



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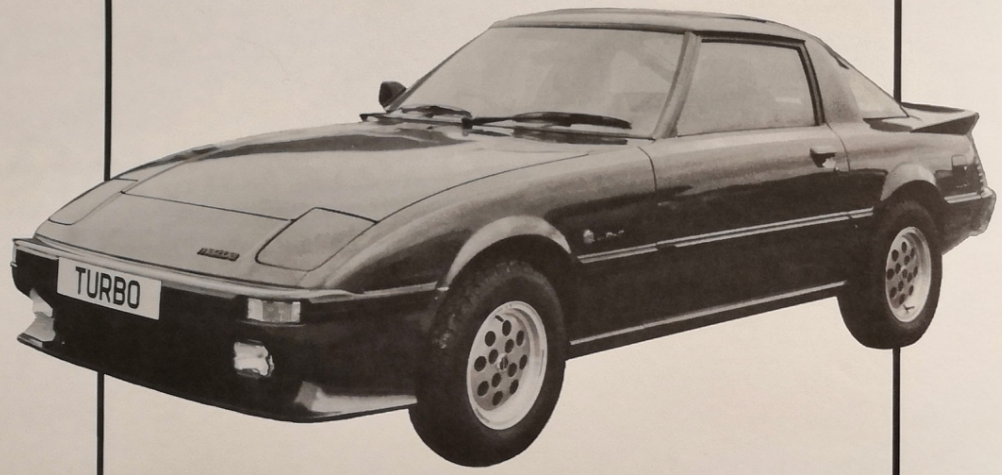

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